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FEATURE

‘The house is yours’

Resettlement agencies say refugees are moving to the suburbs in search of cheaper homes and better-paying jobs.

BY MAX BUDOVITCH 8

Kool Kidz 2144
2144 W. 95th, 312-543-7496
@koolkidz2144



Aisha Burris, Kool Kidz 2144

SHOP WINDOW

Cool jeans

This south side children's boutique satisfies your thirst for denim.

"I WANT ALL the kids to be super cool!" says Aisha Burris, owner of Kool Kidz 2144 in Beverly. The 23-year-old opened the children's clothing store in December 2018. Burris says that after getting pregnant as a teen, she didn't want to be a statistic. "I wanted better for my son, for myself. I wanted the young girls to know that just because you have a baby young, your life is not over."

The shop's aesthetic—whimsical yet tasteful, not shying away from minimalism and dark hues—is in tune with the latest children's decor. There's a mini Pac-Man arcade game, a neon "Support your local girl gang" sign, and black walls covered with chalk drawings. Kids can enjoy the play area or help their parents shop for jeans with all kinds of finishes and details, like frayed hems and motocross-style panels. Burris buys denim pants, skirts, and shorts (\$30) and jackets (\$40) in Los Angeles from brands like Hayden Girls and Haus of JR. Stylish sneakers (\$75) are among the best



sellers. The shop also sells a few locally made products, such as Beyoncé T-shirts (featuring the singer's face, \$20) and "Lil Geek" hoodies (\$80).

Kool Kidz joins a cluster of small local boutiques on 95th Street that have become shopping destinations for fashion enthusiasts: Curve Culture (plus sizes), Dez DeMe House of Styles (fashion-forward garments), and Fashion Geek (sportswear). Burris says it was always her dream to bring something to her neighborhood that was not only high-end, but also affordable. "We deserve that," she says.

—ISA GIALLORENZO

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CITY LIFE



The concept of War Tax Resistance is still technically not legal. 📷 ROBERT COUSE-BAKER

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

Oop! Ack! It's tax time

What to do instead of declaring your she shed a sovereign state

FOR THE MANY of us who are still paying our fair share while corporations and the 1 percent stand around gawking gleefully (“How droll,” they chuckle as the rest of us squabble over minimum wage), we might need help understanding how much we owe.

If you haven’t started getting your stuff together from last year’s wages, you better get to the IRS site and file for an extension posthaste. The official IRS website still has an open and fairly easy-to-use slate of tax information available. If you have a simple return (one W2, single filing, no extra property, etc.), you may want to just file on your own using the free interface at the same IRS site.

If you need a little free one-on-one help, several organizations have open hours all over the city and suburbs. Tax Prep Chicago, a collaboration between the nonprofits Center for Economic Progress and Ladder Up and the city of Chicago run free walk-in tax help sites

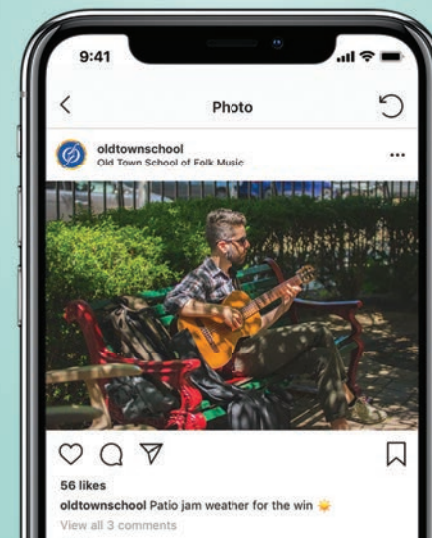
at locations all over the city and select suburbs. This initiative can help single taxpayers who earn up to \$30,000 annually or families who jointly earn up to \$55,000 annually.

In addition, the AARP Foundation offers free tax preparation for the public, and you don’t have to be a certain age or an AARP member to qualify. Go to the AARP site to find locations, days, and times.

A reminder that the concept of War Tax Resistance (in short, refusing to pay some or all tax as a direct-action protest against militarization) is still technically not legal when it comes to federal taxes in this country. As of April 2019, the Religious Freedom Peace Tax Fund Act (aka congressional bill H.R. 1947) has not been ratified, cosponsored, or, honestly, even taken out for lunch. So if you consider yourself a War Tax Resister, officially we’ll have to say you’re on your own.

—SALEM COLLO-JULIN

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NEWS & POLITICS



Alderman Brian Hopkins urged for the council to ignore Emanuel's request. MARISSA DE LA CERDA

POLITICS

A new deal

Lori Lightfoot can negotiate a better agreement at Lincoln Yards and 78.

By **BEN JORAVSKY**

To appreciate the significance of Mayor Rahm's retreat on Lincoln Yards and the 78 projects, let me take you back in time to a previous TIF debate.

The year was 2006. Taylor Hicks had just won the title on *American Idol*—which gives you an idea of how long we've been slogging at this TIF beast.

The city's Community Development Commission was entertaining then-Mayor Daley's proposal for the LaSalle Central TIF district—the Lincoln Yards of its time. Corporate Chicago, both editorial boards, and pretty much everyone other than a handful of gadflies supported this baby.

Only one public official—Cook County commissioner Mike Quigley—dared to speak against it. And the commission chair tried to keep Quigley from speaking on the grounds that, as a county official, he had no say in the matter.

When Hugh Devlin, a Rogers Park activist, testified against the TIF, former alderman Burt Natarus cut him off, bellowing—oh, what does

it matter? Back then Burt was always bellowing about something.

The CDC unanimously approved LaSalle Central, as did the city council. Since then the LaSalle Central TIF's gathered over \$261 million in property tax dollars—far more than all of the TIF districts in Englewood, Woodlawn, Austin, and Roseland combined.

So much for fairness in Chicago.

Now fast-forward to Monday's council events. Almost every newly elected alderman called for a delay in approving both TIFs. Under pressure from a coalition of activists put together by the Grassroots Collaborative, Mayor-elect Lori Lightfoot asked the city council to postpone approval of Lincoln Yards and the 78 deals until she and her staff finished poring over the fine details.

"I want to make sure that we're getting the best possible deal for the city going forward and that we're not hamstrung on other great economic development needs on the south and west side," Lightfoot said on the *Fran Spielman Show*.

Bowing to Lightfoot's wishes, Mayor Rahm

asked the council to postpone the vote on the \$2.4 billion projects, saying: "I made it very clear to the mayor-elect that I would not move forward on these projects if she wanted to delay the process."

Second Ward alderman Brian Hopkins—who's sort of the Natarus of our times, minus Burt's self-deprecating charm—urged for the council to ignore Emanuel's request. "The mayor's not on the finance committee," Hopkins pointed out.

True. But of all the things for Hopkins to suddenly find his spine on.

Anyway, the deal was postponed.

Even as I write that sentence, I can barely believe it. Ordinary community activists forced the mayor to at least temporarily back off on a TIF deal. As the guy who's been pounding the anti-TIF drum since the Reagan years, I feel like Sally Field when she won her Oscar: *You like me! You really like me!*

I'll calm down by pointing out that this fight is far from over. Again, it's only a postponement. For all I know, advocates for both TIF deals may have already bamboozled Lightfoot into complying with their demands by the time you're reading this.

Damn, the mere thought has got me howling at the moon.

In a perfect world, Mayor-elect Lightfoot and the City Council would blow up the current TIF program. Instead, she'd replace it with ward-by-ward allocation of economic development funds, coming right out of the city's budget—as opposed to coming out of a shadow TIF budget that's largely hidden from public view.

That way she could guarantee an equal distribution of development funds, instead of giving the lion's share to a handful of already-gentrifying wards—like Hopkins's.

Of course, Chicago's far from perfect—or even fair. Let's start with some baby steps that might make either one of these TIFs almost tolerable.

At the very least, city officials have got to start telling the truth about Tax Increment Financing. Currently, this is far from the case. For instance, Alderman Patrick O'Connor, outgoing finance committee chair, recently told

the *Sun-Times*: "I think [Lightfoot] might be happy for the cash infusion coming in over the course of the next 20 years from those potential projects."

Planning chief David Reifman seconded this notion, saying, "These sites are absolutely critical as we consider our fiscal issues and our need to grow our tax base without increasing the burden on existing residents and businesses."

Sigh.

This is either willful ignorance or just plain old ignorance. Either way, O'Connor and Reifman might as well be telling us the earth is flat. One more time: There will be no "cash infusion" from these TIFs and they won't decrease "the burden" on taxpayers. Quite the opposite: like all TIFs, they're property tax hikes that will increase the tax burden on us all.

Neither Lincoln Yards nor 78 will add new property taxes to our coffers from the moment their TIF districts are created until the moment they fade away in at least 23 years—or longer, should some future mayor choose to extend them.

Instead, all the new property taxes generated in these TIFs will be used to pay for the projects. In the case of Lincoln Yards, Sterling Bay, the developer, will essentially take property tax dollars that would otherwise go to schools and police and fire, etc. and spend them on themselves. Great deal for Sterling Bay, not so great for the rest of us who will have to come up with new property tax dollars to compensate for the ones we're not getting from Lincoln Yards.

There's also the issue of who will pay for the services Lincoln Yards will require—like, cleaning streets, filling potholes, policing the community, teaching the children, and so forth. If there's a fire, someone has to rush to the scene—you don't expect Alderman Hopkins to put it out, do you?

But property owners in Lincoln Yards will not contribute new property tax dollars to pay for any of those services so long as that TIF district exists. Lori Lightfoot's right—it's time to renegotiate a better deal for Chicago.

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FEATURE

‘The house is yours’

Resettlement agencies say refugees are moving to the suburbs in search of cheaper homes and better-paying jobs.

By **MAX BUDOVITCH**

On July 19, 2016, Mohammad Al Jarboai, his wife, and three children pushed a loaded luggage cart into the crowded waiting area of Terminal 5 at O’Hare International Airport. They had just landed after a 13-hour flight from Amman, Jordan. On the right, people were chatting at a cluster of tables next to a McDonald’s. Al Jarboai wondered what the people were saying, but the crowd pushed



him onward. A man near the door caught sight of the family, walked over in no hurry, and extended a hand. “Welcome,” he said, before pointing the family to a taxi and giving the driver an address.

Al Jarboai, 32, had been a refugee for three and a half years and had known for 15 days that he was bound for Chicago. But as he rode down the Kennedy Expressway, he watched the colorful cars with gaudy license plates passing under highway signs labeled in a foreign alphabet—and realized he didn’t know where he was or where he was going.

He is from the Syrian village of al-Hirak, where the distance between the curb at O’Hare and the Kennedy on-ramp would span several towns. A nearby Roman amphitheater marks the ancient capital of Arabia, which is home to one of the world’s oldest cathedrals, which stands next to one of the world’s oldest mosques. Ask someone where they are from and the answer begins, “Well, 700 years ago . . .”

Most people live in homes that have living rooms filled with plush couches separated by small coffee tables, each with a dish of hard candies at the ready for guests. The tiled floors are washed clean with buckets of soapy water and dried by the afternoon breeze. Glimpses of olive groves and snow-covered mountains waver between silky window curtains. Meeting eyes with a neighbor prompts the obligatory invitation. “Welcome,” the host might say, with a wave toward the couches. “The house is yours,” as the saying goes.

The couches are now empty, the ruins destroyed. When the war started in 2013, Al Jarboai fled Syria for a small Jordanian city called Madaba. He found work building homes on the outskirts of town, got paid poorly, and risked being discovered, detained, and sent back to Syria. While Al Jarboai worked, his oldest son started going to school. First, he would clean the room until the Jordanian students finished class. Then he would study for two hours. Then he would be sent home.

Al Jarboai and his family waited in Jordan for a year, then two, then three. Then, in early July 2016, he got a call from an unknown number. He was told that his family’s background checks, medical tests, and interviews had been approved. A federal contractor had assigned his case to a national resettlement agency, which in turn assigned it to a local resettlement agency. He’d fly to Chicago in two weeks, the voice on the phone told him, and needed to

find a building on Jordanian University Street opposite the University Hospital in Amman. There, the International Organization for Migration held a three-day cultural orientation, in which Al Jarboai learned that, when he arrived in the United States, a caseworker from the local refugee resettlement agency would take him to his new home.

Before Al Jarboai got into the taxi at O’Hare, he tried to imagine what this new home would look like. He knew that many houses in the United States had wooden floors. But when the taxi came to a stop in Rogers Park, he looked up at the door of a Super 8 motel.

Al Jarboai’s resettlement agency, Ethiopian Community Association of Chicago, was unable to find units fast enough to keep up with the high number of arrivals in 2016. Landlords were asking for one year in deposit and proof of employment. “It felt exclusionary,” the agency’s executive director, Aklilu Adeye, said. Adeye started placing refugees in motels and extended-stay hotel rooms. Then the office credit card maxed out at around \$80,000.

The family spent five days at the Super 8 before being moved to an extended-stay hotel near O’Hare that had the benefit of a small kitchen. Weeks of roaring takeoffs and landings were punctuated by submitting paperwork to the Social Security Administration. Al Jarboai rarely went outside, where he was afraid to encounter the Prohibition-era gangland version of Chicago popularized in Middle Eastern pop culture. He didn’t speak a word of English.

Al Jarboai is one of five million people who have fled Syria since 2013 and one of 84,994 refugees who came to the United States during the last year of the Obama administration. Six months after he arrived at O’Hare, a crowd of people holding signs and flags marched by the airport McDonald’s to protest the president’s travel ban, and dozens of lawyers sat at the cluster of tables with the families of passengers who had been detained. But while the protesters marched and judges handed down rulings, what had happened to Al Jarboai?

After about 20 days in the hotel near O’Hare, the resettlement agency found his family an apartment in Edgewater. Finally, he was living in Chicago. As he surveyed the cramped one-bedroom, he heard the lilt of voices on the street. He wondered what they were saying, and felt in some ways more disoriented than he had been listening to the airplanes. “We didn’t know how to use the bus—or ➔



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anything,” he recalls. He didn’t have a job, or know how to find one. Soon, he’d have to pay \$1,100 in rent.

After several weeks in Edgewater, a friend told Al Jarboai about the southwest suburbs. He could find more space there, the friend said, for around \$900 a month. There were Arab markets, restaurants, and doctors there, his friend told him. It was the kind of community where Walgreens puts up Ramadan signs. In some towns, about 14 percent of people speak Arabic (in Bridgeview, Illinois, around 2,300 out of 16,400 residents), compared to 0.5 percent in Chicago (around 14,000 in a city of 2.7 million). By the time the protesters and lawyers descended on O’Hare, Al Jarboai and his family had left Chicago for Worth, Illinois.

A local resettlement agency gets as little as five days’ notice before a refugee family arrives at O’Hare. In that time, the staff uses the limited amount of money provided by the government’s refugee resettlement program to find and furnish an apartment and prepare applications for food stamps, monthly cash assistance, and Medicaid from the Department of Human Services. Three months after arriving in a city, refugees are expected to be employed, off public assistance, covering full rent, and paying off the loan that they took from a state department contractor to buy plane tickets. This is what resettlement agencies call “self-sufficiency.”

Agencies are usually able to place newcomers in jobs so that they can pay their fourth month’s rent. But Ryan Spangler, who worked for ten years as a housing coordinator at a resettlement agency called Heartland Alliance, said that many refugees immediately fall behind. Some of those families are evicted and a small subset end up in homeless shelters or on the sidewalk. While large families’ per-capita government assistance, combined with a job, might cover the rent on a small apartment, a single person’s minimum wage or the \$304 per month he receives in cash from the Department of Human Services probably won’t.

Rents in neighborhoods like Rogers Park, West Ridge, Edgewater, Uptown, and Albany Park that have businesses, doctors, and community centers serving refugee communities have gone up as much as \$100 per month in the last two years, according to a number of landlords. At least four refugee families in Uptown had to leave their building when rents went up

following a gut rehab. Tom Junkovic, a landlord who rents about a quarter of his 200 units to refugees, said that Edgewater is the new Lincoln Park. Self-sufficiency is elusive.

Resettlement agencies have started to look for affordable housing outside of these neighborhoods that have welcomed refugees for years. In 2016, an agency named RefugeeOne resettled a Syrian refugee family on a quiet side street in Skokie, about five miles from the halal markets and Arabic pharmacies on Devon Avenue. *[Editor’s note: The author was a case manager at RefugeeOne in 2016.]* Another agency, World Relief, rented apartments for two Syrian families even farther away, near Cottage Grove and 49th Street along the border between Kenwood and Grand Boulevard. A group of volunteers called the Hyde Park Refugee Project helped RefugeeOne resettle two Syrian families in Hyde Park. Large parts of the city were not seriously considered in the search for affordable alternatives. “Given how vulnerable a new refugee is,” Spangler said, “we were afraid that the south and west sides would be retraumatizing.”

Penny Visser, director of the Hyde Park Refugee Project, said that when the Hyde Park families went to their first English lesson in Uptown and told the class that their commute began on Garfield Boulevard, they learned from their incredulous peers—many of whom may have only spent several weeks in Chicago and never traveled farther south than Montrose Avenue—about how “dangerous” the south side was. At first, newcomers are skeptical about why their friends warn them that certain areas are off-limits. But after much repetition, the skeptics start passing on the warnings. Refugees who drive for rideshare companies recount, with the authority of the now-well-acquainted, the first time they unwittingly accepted a request from Englewood or Lawndale.

After class, the families nervously boarded the train back to Hyde Park, wondering how they could have missed what their classmates described. Visser said she had to reinforce that Hyde Park, confined between the Midway, Washington Park, 51st Street, and Lake Michigan, was like a small village in a big city, and that it was safe. It is a place, Visser said, where everyone seems to know each other. Her volunteers networked with doctors at the University of Chicago Hospital to get the families medical attention, and with someone who works at Medicaid to help them navigate

health insurance. When a baby was due, Hyde Park residents provided diapers and other supplies to last a year.

From the remove of Jordan, a new life in Chicago is no more than a vague idea. The first month after arrival is the rhythm of government forms and visits with a caseworker, and

“We didn’t know
how to use the
bus—or anything.”

—Mohammad Al Jarboai

then a growing awareness of the city—its markets, doctors, buses, and off-limits areas. But when the resettlement agency stops paying rent and government benefits dwindle, life in Chicago is shaped by the other organizations that provide support.

In Hyde Park, a religious group provided student-rate housing for two of the families, which Visser said is how they were able to afford the neighborhood. An organization called the Syrian Community Network provides six months of rental assistance to every Syrian refugee in the city. In years past, the Network also provided cars. Sirat, a Hyde Park-based

Muslim organization, offers forgiveness on the loans refugees take out to pay for travel to the United States. Even with this assistance, however, Visser tells of a father who must work three jobs—one full-time, one on the weekend, and a cleaning gig—to make ends meet. Like many newly arrived refugee families, when he started making enough money to barely get by, he lost his cash benefits from the government. Visser said that she and her volunteers “had no idea how minimal the support is.”

A long 18th Street in Pilsen, vendors count change in Spanish while selling bags of fruit covered in salsa and lemon juice. In Pulaski Park, the smell of *golabki* wafts from a kitchen. A new market next to the el in Albany Park makes sweets that, before it opened, could only be found in Damascus.

The city, however, is changing. Wide-windowed lofts still fresh with construction dust are taking the place of Pilsen’s brick homes and backyard vegetable patches. New high-rises next to el stops demand top dollar as Pulaski Park becomes too expensive for people to stay. Residents march through Albany Park before the next building of tenants is evicted ahead of a gut rehab. Across the country, the cost of housing is rising faster than both inflation and wages, and cities are filling out with tony neighborhoods built for office workers. As a result, resettlement staff have noticed that refugees are moving to the suburbs where there is cheaper housing and sometimes better-paying jobs. Al Jarboai was one of them.

Even though his first job at a restaurant in Worth only paid eight dollars an hour, he felt more comfortable because of the large Arab community. Then, someone at the restaurant told Al Jarboai he could earn more driving for Uber. He was soon earning \$700 a week behind the wheel, compared to \$350 in the kitchen. He then found a job at a tow truck company near Midlothian, Illinois, where he has worked ever since.

The national agencies that send refugee families to different parts of the United States are keeping an eye on this suburban migration. Church World Service (CWS) has heard from their 19 local affiliates—in places like Louisville, Kentucky, and Concord, New Hampshire, and Lancaster, Pennsylvania—that refugees are moving from cities to suburbs in search of lower rents. CWS, which resettles refugees through RefugeeOne in Chicago, collects data



Amr Othman Agha AMR OTHMAN AGHA

on average rents, monitors the availability of apartments, and examines refugees' starting salary. In light of the rising cost of housing, Mia Witte, the associate director for resettlement at CWS, said that community support, like that offered by the Hyde Park Refugee Project, impacts the agency's decision on where to resettle refugees.

Despite the finely-tuned resettlement apparatus that accounts for everything from medical tests to flights to housing to food stamps, where that extra support comes from—and where people end up because of it—is often a surprise. Amr Othman Agha, 39, who fled Syria in 2013, was among the refugees who arrived in the U.S. during the summer of 2016. He lived in Sacramento, California, for several days before moving by himself to Oakland. For Agha, America was the iron doors and alarm systems that he saw on every home in his new neighborhood. America was the feeling of being told that it wasn't safe to go out after 6 PM. America was paying \$500 to share a single bedroom with three other people. After six months, he decided he would go back to either Syria or Egypt. But as Agha prepared to leave, a friend of a friend in Chicago named David Graubard told him to come visit before making up his mind.

On December 6, 2016, Agha walked out into the waiting area at O'Hare. Graubard caught sight of him, quickly walked over, extended a celebratory balloon, and beckoned him to his car. They pulled away from the curb and merged onto the Kennedy. When the car came to a stop in Albany Park, Agha looked up at a

three-flat. "Welcome to your home," Graubard said.

Agha took English classes at Truman College. Graubard helped him find a job as a dishwasher in Lakeview and then as a case manager at the Syrian Community Network in Edgewater. He helped him apply for a green card. In January 2019, after making it through immigration on his way back from reuniting for a brief time with family in London, Agha passed confidently by the cluster of tables next to the McDonald's at O'Hare where the protesters had marched two years before. When he hailed a taxi at the curb, Graubard was at his side, having accompanied him all the way back from Europe, just to be safe.

The voices on the street and the signs in a foreign alphabet are now conversations and directions. Agha, who pays for utilities and groceries, still shares the apartment with Graubard, who pays the rent. The neighborhood has everything Agha needs—a Walgreens, a Jewel, and three bus lines. A nearby police station makes him feel safe.

Syrians come to Agha's office seeking help in submitting paperwork to the Department of Human Services. People tell him that their multiple jobs aren't enough to pay the rent, and his office helps. When Arabic greetings echo through the room and a box of cookies makes its way from desk to desk, Agha feels like he's back in Syria. Then he remembers what Graubard told him as they pulled up in front of the house for the first time, and his voice swells. "Chicago is my place, my country."

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Fish 'n' faith

Lenten fish frys are a delicious and ubiquitous part of the Catholic midwest.

By **BRITTANY SOWACKE**



For more than 30 years the Irish American Heritage Center on the northwest side has hosted Lenten fish frys, an all-you-can-eat fried cod buffet.



Saint Andrew Parish in Lakeview hosted two Lenten fish frys, where an estimated 800 baskets sold each night. The fish fry tradition references the Bible parable of “the feeding of the multitudes,” where Jesus and his disciples fed a crowd of 5,000 with only five loaves of bread and two fish.



“I’m a dessert apprentice tonight,” says Patty Blum, whose childhood home is just around the corner from Saint Albert the Great Catholic Church in Burbank. At least nine different homemade desserts were donated to the fish fry.



Volunteer cooks Bob, Glenn, and Jim work the breading station at Saint Albert the Great's Lenten fish fry. For three hours, the basement buzzes with deep fryers, chatter, and excitement.



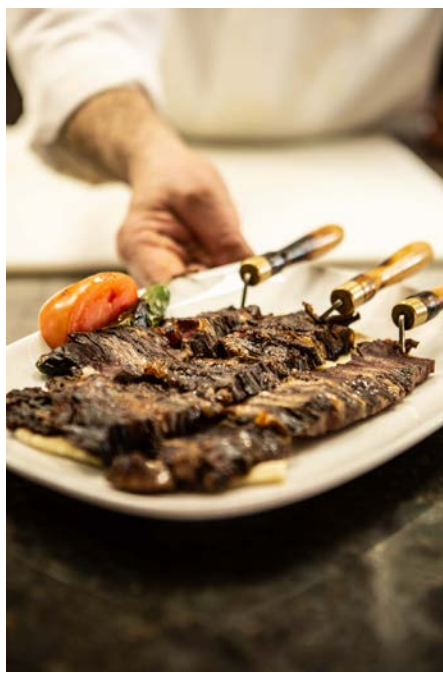
Friends Mary, Arlene, and Pat of Saint Symphorosa Church came to the fish fry at Saint Albert the Great, hosted every Friday of the season in the church basement.



Aine McNulty dances to Irish music next to her mother, Deirdre (to her left), while the O'Hara School of Irish Dancers performs around the corner at the Irish American Heritage Center's Annual Lenten Fish Fry.



Offering the choice between a fish basket for \$12 or a mac and cheese basket for \$7, the two-day BYOB event hosted by Saint Andrew Parish filled the school's gymnasium. 



RESTAURANT REVIEW

A kebab crawl from the lake and beyond

A handful of new restaurants offers Turkey's most recognizable culinary export and more.

By **MIKE SULA**

“We like the sea and the lake,” says Özkan Yilmaz, the owner of Turkitch, a new café in Lakeview just a half-mile from the second largest body of water in the Americas. That’s why he reckons so many Turks choose to live in the neighborhood, and why, consequently, there are so many Turkish restaurants there, from the Gundis to Cafe Orchid to ZiZi’s and more.

Yilmaz brings a unique concept to that group, specializing in Turkish breakfast, sandwiches, and pastries, building on the wholesale line of frozen baklava, börek, and simit he launched three years ago in Milwaukee. Available for purchase in a frozen case next to the register, the branding is a portmanteau of “Turkish and “kitchen” (not an ancient Otto-

man skin condition), and the space has a Starbucks-like quality to it. It’s bright and open, with plenty of room to stretch out before the gleaming glass display cases showing off the sandwiches, sweets, and a few of the hot dishes. Some of the latter are fairly uncommon in these parts, such as *menemen*, a saucy tomato, pepper, and egg scramble, or the *soujouk* omelette, a layer of over easy eggs ringed by coins of salami-like beef sausage. Both are ideally sopped up with wedges of lightly toasted, black sesame-spackled breads, basketed and served with each order. And they’re best idled over with ornate demitasses of thick, inky coffee, or curvaceous glasses of black tea.

It’s a model designed for lingering, and the obverse of Ali Baba Doner, which opened right around the same time, just a couple doors down, and

concentrated on Turkey’s most recognizable culinary export. Doner kebab, the Ottoman ancestor to shawarma, gyros, and tacos al pastor, is perhaps the world’s most international hangover remedy, available on street corners and sidewalks all over the planet. Though it’s typically carved from upright stacks of spinning lamb, or lamb and veal, owner Atalai Oenem brings a more contemporary chicken variant, via Munich, where he worked in the hotel business. The centerpiece of his storefront is an upright golden cone of laminated poultry—“organic,” he’ll remind you more than once—which he shaves with an electric kebab cutter that buzzes the sizzling, crisping outer edge of the flesh as it rotates around the heating element. It’s a comforting display of mechanical efficiency that seems particularly of Germany, the country controversially credited with popularizing the late-night doner kebab sandwich; meat stuffed in a warm pocket of pita, bedazzled (or disguised) by an array of sauces and garnishes that adapt to whatever country you’re eating it in.

Oenem offers a fairly conservative selection of these: lettuce, onions, cabbage, tomato, slices of feta if you like, creamy garlic sauce, and chili flakes. You can request it all and he’ll still construct a well-balanced sandwich, the cool crunchy salad in harmony with the juicy, caramelized (don’t forget: “organic”) poultry and its soft, warm pita Snuggie. You can get this in variations: on a plate, with rice or fries, but the important thing, Oenem will stress, is that you eat it right away.

Anyone who’s ever stood in line for doner (or al pastor, or shawarma) understands what a grave disappointment it is to approach a glistening, sizzling, spinning monument of meat, only to be served old scraps that had been previously set aside for expediency, maybe even only minutes before. You can’t easily see the doner spinning at Istanbul Grill, around the corner and up a couple blocks on Clark Street, a small storefront with more tables and a much broader menu. When I visited one early weekday afternoon I might not have ordered it if I’d seen it first. It was the more common lamb and veal variety, but though the sandwich was (uncommonly) built on a nicely crusty section of baguette, the meat was dry and tough and a chore to get through. Closer inspection behind the counter revealed why: the cone had been whittled down to a gray nubbin, something that couldn’t have happened in the short period of time they’d been open that day.

But Istanbul Grill has more to recommend it than day-old doner: particularly flatbreads,



From left: organic poultry rules the cone at Ali Baba Doner; skewers of classic doner at Café Istanbul; pide on a plank at Istanbul Grill; Ali Baba Doner ALEXUS MCLANE



Café Istanbul ALEXUS MCLANE



and namely *lahmacun*. You'll annoy your Turkish friends if you call it "Turkish pizza," but it is a thin and lovely oblong of blistered and charred dough, blanketed with a spicy-sweet tomatoey beef mince. And it is the kind of thing that inspires you to forget your manners and devour it with abandon (and maybe start trolling your Italian friends by calling pizza "Italian lahmacun"). Istanbul Grill features another alluring flatbread: *pide*, a more risen dough formed in a long, ovoid canoe, filled with, among other possible things, a roasty caramelized mash of eggplant, tomato, and mushrooms, and a molten layer of mozzarella.

Istanbul Grill's broad menu encompasses a variety of kebabs, salads, and essentially Turkish things like *kazandibi*, a creamy, caramelized, resinously-perfumed "burned" milk pud-

ding that my fellow doner explorer insisted I return for after I absentmindedly left it behind.

The variety there is in some part thanks to Chef Mustafa Guler, formerly of Roscoe Village's *Turquoise*. Guler was lured out of a brief retirement to open this place last summer under the rubric Café Istanbul, which he has since taken far away from the water to Wicker Park, in a more formal white-tablecloth setting where you can order risotto and ribeye alongside your *patlican salatasi* and *imam bayildi*. It's the last place you'd expect to see street food, but Guler offers classic lamb and veal doner as well, in addition to perhaps its most magnificent and dramatic variation: *cag dza kebab*.

Originally from Turkey's far eastern Erzurum Province, it's a stack of juicy, all-lamb shoulder and saddle, interspersed with tail



Doner cone of lamb and veal at Istanbul Grill ALEXUS MCLANE



Slicing *lahmacun* at Istanbul Grill ALEXUS MCLANE

fat, all impaled on a horizontal spit. Unlike the space-saving doner machine, this rig makes efficient use of a wood-burning fire, with the meat running parallel to burning oak splits. It maintains a superlative char, as it's threaded onto a skewer and sliced free of the cone. Elegantly plated on a bed of rice, there's no better thing for this than a glass of red, in particular the Turkish varieties Guler has on his list.

You can finish whatever you're eating at these new Turkish restaurants with hot slurps of Turkish coffee, but maybe the most transporting version of this can be found in Logan

Square at Four Letter Word, the second location of an Istanbul roaster and café, opened by Whiner Beer's Ria Neri and high school chum Eylem Ozkaya. Four Letter Word offers "Turkish style" coffee in pretty porcelain cups, without the standard formal presentation, but brewed with the outstanding single-origin Brazilian beans they're roasting at their facility at the Plant in Back of the Yards. It's pretty far from the water, but not far off from what you'd drink in Turkey.

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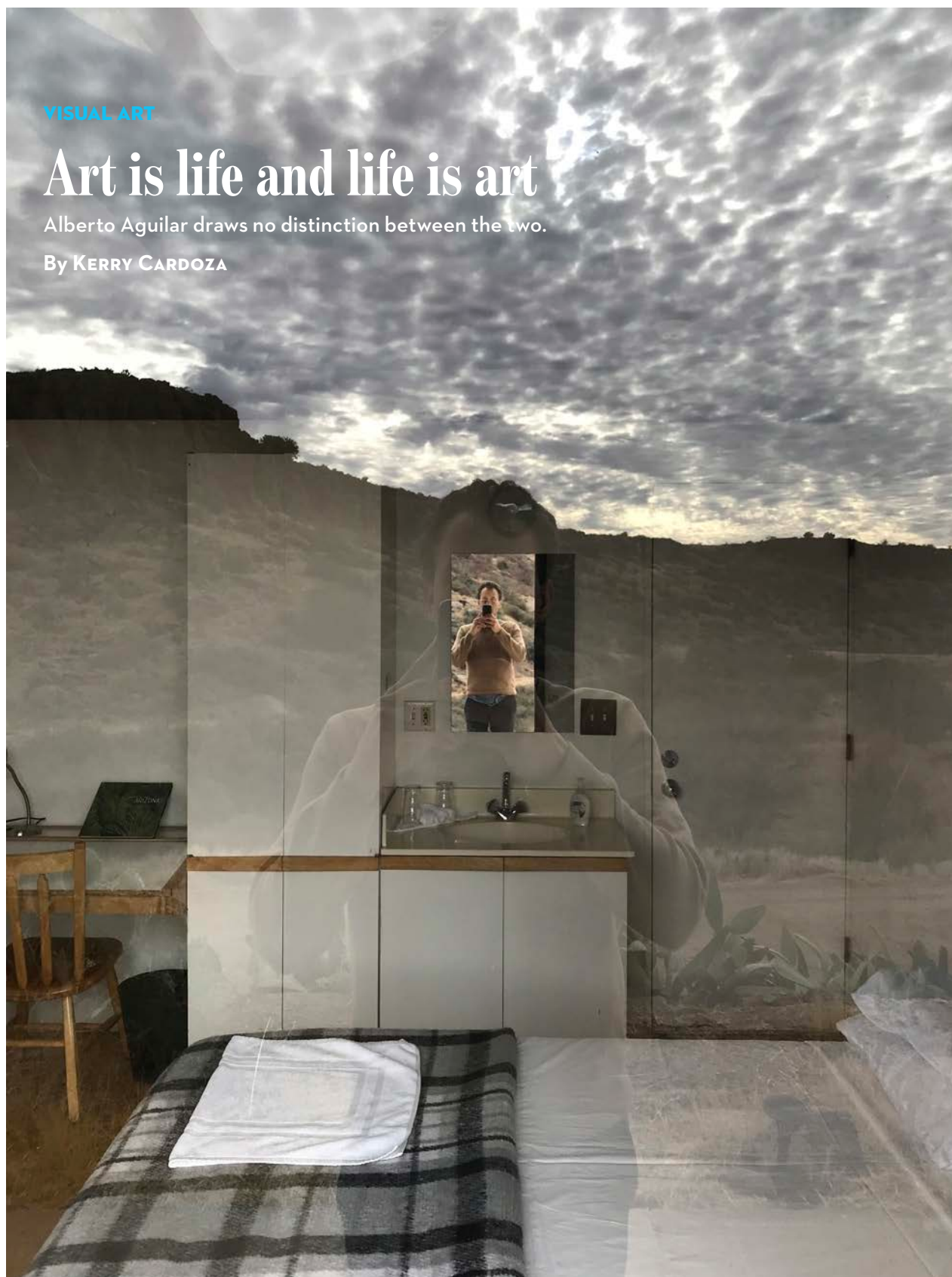
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VISUAL ART

Art is life and life is art

Alberto Aguilar draws no distinction between the two.

By KERRY CARDOZA



Room View (Arcosanti, AZ), 2018 © COURTESY THE ARTIST

In 2006, the artist Alberto Aguilar decided to let go of his studio. “I don’t like things that throw off being free,” he says. “And not having a studio is, for me, being very free, to not have to make things in that designated space. To think of any of these spaces as a place to make things.”

Aguilar makes work everywhere—while teaching art classes, during road trips with his family, while commuting to his job. He embodies the idea of living life like a work of art. He believes that art “results from the activities of creative people moving through life,” that an activity becomes art simply by naming it so. For his “Domestic Monuments” series, the artist creates temporary installations using household objects. In one, a tubular glowing lamp runs horizontally through the open backs of four chairs. In the “Indiscreet Line” series, objects found in the streets of Havana, Cuba, were arranged in lines, photographed, and then left to live out their fates as ephemeral public artworks. The resulting documentation—of fallen pink flower petals in a public square or tree pods running down the middle of a sidewalk—are stunning in their simplicity.

Aguilar, now 45, wasn’t always the sort of artist who made conceptual or performative work. Tall and lanky, with close-cropped brown hair, he began his career as a traditional painter, inspired by powerhouses like Picasso and Cézanne. But as his life began to include more responsibilities—as a husband, a college professor, and father to four children—he realized that he wanted a simplified creative practice. The dissolution of his studio came around the time he started working full time as a studio art professor at Harold Washington College. He resigned from that job in 2018: after 12 years, he was ready for new challenges. (He now adjuncts at UIC and the School of the Art Institute and makes art.) The period from the end of the studio practice until his resignation serves as a rough framework for “moves on human scale,” his upcoming solo exhibition at Gallery 400.

Lorelei Stewart, the gallery’s director, says she was immediately excited about the prospect of showing Aguilar’s work. “Presenting Alberto’s work is such a pleasure because it’s so searching and inquisitive,” she says. ➔

"MOVES ON HUMAN SCALE"

4/26-6/15: Tue-Fri 10 AM-6 PM, Sat noon-6 PM, Gallery 400, 400 S. Peoria, 312-996-6114, gallery400.uic.edu. **FREE**

"It's everydayness is deeply accessible, in a way, as to almost efface its creativity. But that's where something more profound is at work, I'd say. At its heart, there's a democratic ethos embedded in his work. In the process of recognizing, even identifying with, Alberto's familiar materials and methods, we viewers access the possibility of our radical everyday imaginations, not because Alberto's work is easy but because it proposes that creative capacities are in all of us."

Aguilar grew up in Cicero, where his parents owned a small grocery store called La Grande. After school, Aguilar and his siblings (three brothers and one sister) would walk there and hang out in the back. His mother cooked dinner for them in the deli. Then, once his father arrived at the store from his first job, he would take over and his mother would walk them home.

"At the store, I remember we used to take this butcher paper, and we used to roll out a big sheet and we would just draw on there," Aguilar says. "We always drew, especially my brother who's a couple years older than I am. Him and I were really good at drawing. But he was better, because he would draw without hesitation, and my drawing was always more like scratchy lines."

He remembers this period as a happy time. The family was close, taking frequent road trips to Florida or Mexico, where his parents



Still from *Sensitive Equipment*, 2012 COURTESY THE ARTIST

are from. "It was happy up until the point where I realized we all kind of grew apart, when I was still in high school," he says.

It was also in high school, at Glenbard East, that Aguilar became seriously interested in making art. He came to it in a roundabout way.

"I was really into mind-altering substances," he says. "And I think that I was into it because of what it gave me, like, the access that it gave me to seeing things in such a different kind of way. And for how it allowed me to see how strange life really was." But then one day, while high, he had a negative experience that changed his trajectory. He looked up at the sky, and its vast endlessness became overwhelming and frightening.

After that he stopped using drugs. He decided to improve his life and started focusing more on school. He enrolled in a photography class and he excelled at it. But what really interested him was a painting class in the next room. "I would always see all the painters go in and out of the room, and I felt kind of envious," he says. "I felt like I belonged there."

Eventually he signed up for painting and was quickly hooked. His senior year he visited the Art Institute of Chicago for the first time. He had never been to an art museum before. "I was looking at paintings, but I started to become curious of the source of what I was looking at," he says. "I wanted to see some of these things in real life."

At the museum, he was struck by a highly abstract Cubist portrait by Picasso titled *Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler*. Kahnweiler, a German art dealer, is depicted in dozens of scattered planes. The muted brown and gray tones of his body blend in with the atmosphere around him. "When I looked at it, it was like alive," Aguilar says. "He left all those forms open, and it looked like these planes were just in constant flux." Aguilar was amazed that a painting made in 1910 could still feel so vibrant. "I think that I made that connection that this was what

I was searching for when I did drugs," Aguilar says. "Like I could have that experience outside of doing them. I think that's what artists do, and I was amazed."

His high school painting teachers encouraged his pursuit of art. In fact, they submitted an application for him to SAIC—an experience that would shape the rest of his life. Aguilar was a serious student at SAIC, interested mainly in painting and drawing, copying the styles of Picasso and his modernist contemporaries. "I was resistant towards these more conceptual artists," he says. "I was very traditional."

The artist Jorge Lucero has been friends with Aguilar since they were in high school. They also attended SAIC at the same time, where at one point they shared a studio. "We spent a lot of time working alongside each other and staying up drawing," Lucero says. He recalls Aguilar as always "totally serious" about his work. "Not unlike how he is now: dedicated."

The painter Clintel Steed, who also attended undergrad with Aguilar, agrees. "He's always challenged himself," Steed says. He recalls one time when the school organized a first-come, first-served trip to Italy. "We stayed there all night waiting in line, like it was a concert or something." On the trip, Steed says, a lot of the other students treated it as a vacation. Not Aguilar. He spent his time visiting museums, seeing the classics, and painting. "He's always been a serious dude," Steed says. "It's just a way of looking at life." He compares Aguilar's focus to that of Picasso. "I think that's what people don't get, to be Picasso in the studio. He made like three or four paintings a day. If you're gonna try to somehow stand up to that, then you've got to bring it, you know what I'm saying? You can't be joking around with that. We were all painting hard."

"The thing about the Art Institute is that—and I don't know if it's still like this—but,

ARTS & CULTURE

when we were there, there was one part of it that was what the teachers were trying to give you," Lucero explains. "But there was another chunk, and I think it was the predominant part, it was what you could do with your classmates. It was how you taught each other. I think through that, we sort of challenged each other. We were able to egg each other on to even more adventurous areas."

When Aguilar was 23, he graduated from SAIC and got married. He and his wife, Sonia, moved to Arizona, where Aguilar's parents had relocated. Aguilar continued to make work and decided to pursue a master's degree. He assumed he would attend Arizona State University, so he didn't apply anywhere else. But then he didn't get in. Depressed, the next year he applied to several other schools. When he was accepted at SAIC, he knew without a doubt that he wanted to go back.

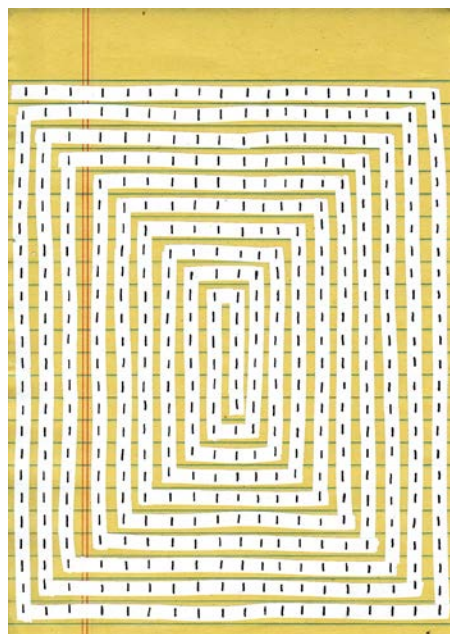
"There was just a loneliness that I felt out there, especially in the summertime," he says. "I just wanted to come back to a bigger city. I loved my time at SAIC, and I think that the two years away made me realize how much I loved it."

One day in 2012, Aguilar came down the stairs of his Garfield Ridge home to find two of his children, Madeleine and Paolo, hitting a balloon around the living room with handbells. The game was simple: you had to stay in the confined space of the area rug and when the balloon touched the ground, the game was over. Immediately charmed, Aguilar asked for permission to film the game and then joined in.

In the resulting video, Aguilar and his pajama-clad kids move around the room, bouncing the red balloon to one another. The handbells, constantly in motion, sound like wind chimes. Their highly resonant tone adds a pleasant atmospheric effect. In the foreground Aguilar's other two children, Isabella and Joaquin, play a computer game. Though offscreen, their voices are clearly heard. Just as the balloon falls to the floor and the game ends, Isabella says the phrase "sensitive equipment."

"It was very serendipitous and perfect that that should be the title of the work," Aguilar says.

Sensitive Equipment, which was originally displayed at the Museum of Contemporary Art in 2013 as part of Aguilar's installation *Home Field Play*, will be the centerpiece of the Gallery 400 exhibition. "It encompasses so much of the kind of ethos of his work, and ➔



Drawing in Passing, 04.28.14, 2014, pen and correction tape on mini legal COURTESY THE ARTIST

ARTS & CULTURE

continued from 17

the sense of his coming out of his everyday context, and using very familiar elements to create unfamiliar or even surprising experiences,” Stewart says. “It will be very participatory for our visitors. It’s in the center of the space, so people can really have access to his process, which I think is such a compelling part of the work that people can identify with. “This is so inventive and creative, but I also could have done it, but I didn’t.”

The playful, interactive piece, made collaboratively with his kids during a normal day at home, is a perfect encapsulation of the work in “moves on human scale.” There will be selections from his “Sound Conversations” series, recorded conversations between the artist and a collaborator. Often remixed and sometimes set to music, the pieces aren’t straightforward dialogue—they are shaped by wordplay and randomness. One moment, the participants might be talking about beards, which leads to talk of beer. Aguilar often repeats a word or phrase, as a way to fill time or bide it, until another idea strikes.

Laura Shaeffer, a local curator who now runs the Oak Park domestic gallery Compound Yellow, looks back fondly on past exhibitions and art happenings she’s staged with Aguilar. For one event, the two went door-to-door in Hyde Park collecting white objects from residents to be displayed in a defunct library space. At the opening event, all the guests wore white and a chef served an all-white dinner—all Aguilar’s idea.

“Collaborating with Alberto is kind of like looking through a camera obscura,” Shaeffer says. “Everything is flipped upside down and seems foreign, in a delightful and illuminating way. You never know what’s coming next or what’s going to happen. Working with him makes me feel alive, in all ways.”

Through his work as a professor over the past 15 years, he has also collaborated frequently with students. In many ways, his teaching is just another extension of his art practice. Joseph Josué Mora, an artist who studied with Aguilar at Harold Washington in 2012, recalls that Aguilar would start every class with a performance. “He’d pull down the projector screen and go behind it,” Mora says. “The only thing you could see of him was his legs and then he would just start chanting or singing in a poetic way and talk about time, about how his time was running out. It was very in the moment.”

Alex Bradley Cohen, also a former Harold Washington student, is one of Aguilar’s most

frequent collaborators. The two have made videos and sound conversations, performed in variety shows together, and collaborated on multiple installations and exhibitions. When the two met, in 2009, Cohen was treating school casually. A high school dropout, he describes himself at the time as very unfocused. But Aguilar’s teaching approach appealed to him.

“He’s able to meet students where they are and create opportunities for them to learn on their own terms,” Cohen says. “He makes the classroom a place in which failure is a possibility for finding truth, or finding correctness. For me, that was amazing because I dropped out of high school. That made learning safe or something.”

Cohen, who has become good friends with Aguilar, later transferred to SAIC after Aguilar applied on his behalf. He’s now pursuing an MFA in painting at Northwestern University.

Cohen sees Aguilar as consistent no matter what role he’s inhabiting. “I can’t separate him, his work, and his teaching practice at all,” Cohen says. “For me, it’s like what sets his work apart, I think it’s just what sets him apart as a person. What sets him apart is the way that he fights for freedom in the world, freedom of expression. He’s fearless. That’s one thing that he always tried to get me to be as an artist, is fearless.”

Many of Aguilar’s collaborations with his oldest child will also be featured in the exhibition. Madeleine, now 21, is a junior at SAIC, concentrating on print media and fibers. “Moves on human scale” will include autobiographical comics and books she’s made about her family. Her presence will also show up in other ways: through background music she

composed for the sound pieces, in home-based videos, photographs, and of course through the invention of *Sensitive Equipment*.

The Aguilar family is by all accounts close. Although some family members are less interested in being a part of Aguilar’s artwork than others, Madeleine says, they are all used to it, and they all recognize the importance of the work.

“There are times when we’re doing weird things, in strange poses, or just like standing in a corner and he’s taking a picture of us,” she says. “There’s a lot of humor involved and we acknowledge that in the moment. But there’s also a lot of seriousness. Like if he’s taking a picture of the dog, you can’t call the dog’s name because then it’s going to ruin everything. So we have to be super careful. Not that he’ll get mad, but we know: this is important. This is what he’s doing. It is fun, and it is funny a lot of the time, but it’s also something that we know is important.”

For Aguilar, part of the beauty of not having a studio, of creating art out of everyday moments, is the opportunity to capture family moments. “I think that art is a way to document things as they take place, within even my personal history,” he says. “I like the power of art to be able to do that.”

Reflecting on the moment in high school when he realized his family had grown apart fills him with emotion: the inherent sadness of the passage of time, the regret of not enjoying things in the moment. His open approach to making art stems directly from this, as in the piece *Pizza Parade*.

For the ephemeral 2012 work, the Aguilar family walked west on Archer Avenue from Pulaski to Harlem, stopping in each pizza



Pizza Parade, 2012 © COURTESY THE ARTIST

place they encountered and asking for a free slice. Aguilar’s youngest son, Joaquin, wore a pizza costume emblazoned with buttons handmade by Madeleine. *Pizza Parade*, which figures prominently in Aguilar family lore, will be represented in the show by the costume, which normally hangs over the stairs at their home, alongside a photo of Joaquin posing unhappily in front of a church. In addition to showing these artifacts in the context of an art show, Aguilar likes for the objects to have significance for his family.

“In that picture, my son, he has a grumpy face because he never really liked those kind of things, even as a young kid,” he says. “But my hope is that some day, he’s going to look at those objects and he’s going to realize the significance of them and what they meant in our family history.”

Madeleine sees her father’s approach to life as inherently radical. “I’ve been to a lot of his lectures, I’ve performed at a lot of his lectures too, and I’ve just heard the questions that people have asked him,” she says. “And what I’ve come to understand about what’s special about his work is that it’s kind of like a different way of living, or a different way of experiencing the world. And it’s not really about trying to prove a point, or trying to say something, but it’s just a way of living that is able to speak to a wide group of people, which I think is pretty amazing. And I think in a lot of ways, his work and the way that it’s entwined in our lives, it challenges the way of the world.”

Allan Kaprow, the late American artist known for popularizing art “happenings,” once wrote, “Playing with everyday life often is just paying attention to what is conventionally hidden.” For Aguilar, that sentiment rings particularly true. He looks at the mundanity of everyday life—folding laundry, painting the garage door, lecturing to a class—and sees things with a freshness and a presence that most of us lack.

“I do want to always have an awareness because I think that it always is important,” he says. “We as humans just don’t realize that because we’re blinded by being tired, or we’re blinded by having—whatever—a hangover, we’re blinded by all the worries of the world. That stops us from seeing how amazing things are. And it’s not that I always realize how amazing things are. But I think that making the work allows me to see that more clearly, and also to hopefully share that with my family, but also with other people.”

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ARTS & CULTURE

DANCE

Sweetness and dark

The ABT arrives at the Auditorium Theatre with the surreal *Whipped Cream*.

By OLIVER SAVA



Princess Tea Flower; *Whipped Cream* set

© COURTESY THE ARTIST

In the surreal world of American Ballet Theatre's *Whipped Cream*, a boy is hospitalized after gorging on sweets, sending him into a vibrant fantasyland of dancing desserts while a drunk doctor and a gang of syringe-wielding nurses attempt to treat his illness. This massive spectacle cost nearly \$3 million to create, blending two ambitious, unique creative perspectives to revitalize a largely forgotten 1924 score by composer Richard Strauss.

Choreographed by Alexei Ratmansky with set and costume designs by pop surrealist painter Mark Ryden in his theatrical debut, *Whipped Cream* is the first production in Auditorium Theatre's new four-year partnership with ABT. The contrast of creepy and adorable visuals in Ryden's artwork makes him the ideal designer to shape the show's aesthetic, which engages with childhood fears even as it delivers a steady stream of whimsy.

"One of the things I like best about *Whipped Cream* is the contrast between sweetness and darkness," says Ryden. "The ballet travels from a happy sweet world to a dark mysterious world and then back again. Life contains dark and light. To see and experience anything, there must be contrast. Without darkness there would be no light."

Of all his fantastical designs for the show, the snow yak that carries Princess Praline stands out for Ryden. "When I first came up with the idea of incorporating this character of mine into the ballet, I didn't think everybody would

go for it," he says. "But they loved it. It was a very complicated piece to engineer. There are two dancers inside, one operating the head and front legs, the other the hind legs and a baby that rides upon the back of the yak."

A team of set and costume technicians had the challenge of translating Ryden's designs to the stage, finding solutions that would vent heat, allow for movement, and provide visibility for dancers moving large pieces through a cast of 65 people.

"[*Whipped Cream*] is an entry point to understand what the theater part of our title is about," says ABT artistic director Kevin McKenzie. "The artwork and the design had as much input as the choreography, but choreographically, it's probably some of the most challenging for every level of dancer in it."

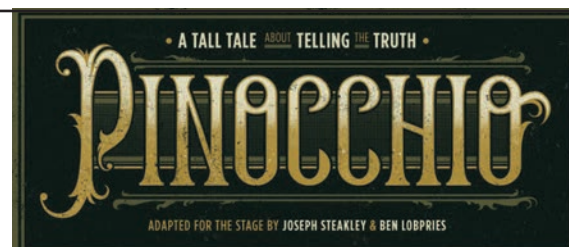
Following the 2017 announcement that the Joffrey Ballet would be moving from the Auditorium Theatre to the Civic Opera House starting in 2020, the Auditorium found a mighty replacement to fill its ballet void in ABT. "We are the nation's ballet company and Chicago is one of the major cities in the world," says McKenzie. "We're supposed to bring the best of American dance to the world, and with a city of such culture in a theater with such historic significance, it would be a sin of omission to not be coming to Chicago and the Auditorium Theatre." 

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Lottery Day LIZ LAUREN

REVIEW

Community trust

Lottery Day brings Ike Holter's Chicago Cycle to a triumphant close.

By SHERI FLANDERS

A meditation on endings and new beginnings, *Lottery Day* is a fitting capstone for Ike Holter's seven-play Chicago Cycle. Each play cast a spotlight on overwhelmingly unsolvable issues like gentrification, violence, politics, and community identity in the fictional 51st ward of Rightlynd, and *Lottery Day* attempts to reckon with the sum of these parts. Through pointed references to Chicago politics, Holter takes aim at entities such as Rahm Emanuel, Lori Lightfoot, the reviled police academy, and the thinly veiled "Applewood Foundation," all of which strive

to change disinvested neighborhoods by making choices that they will never have to feel the impact of.

In *Lottery Day*, neighborhood matriarch Mallory, who lives in the last old house on a newly "revitalized" block, invites a hand-picked list of her closest family and friends to her backyard for an evening of merriment and mystery. Played by an explosively charismatic J. Nicole Brooks, Mallory is unapologetically saturated in her own existence, full of glamorous joie de vivre, piss and vinegar, and a lot of weed.

Her boisterous guests hoot and holler to the dismay of her snooty (some might say siddity) neighbor Vivien. Holter excels at excavating the personal details of gentrification through Vivien, played by a delightfully neurotic Michele Vazquez. She's the neighbor who parrots false pleasantries, who can't be bothered to explore real friendship by stopping by for a drink, and who calls the police for petty annoyances. When Vivien tells Mallory, "Now that the neighborhood is new, we have a responsibility to be better," Holter makes clear that this conversation is about dominance, not negotiation.

Yet coexistence is the nexus of a neighborhood, and at the heart of every community is a Mallory: a person who holds everything together through sheer will. Warm lighting that casts beautiful golden hues and a musical backdrop of nostalgia-inducing soul hits like "Memory Lane" by Minnie Riperton immediately cue us into the love she possesses for her odd collection of blood and chosen family. Other characters from Holter's universe make appearances here: Cassandra (a powerful McKenzie Chinn, toting a magical baby that never cries) from *Sender*, and her sister, Zora, a hilariously intense Sydney Charles, revisiting her vigilante role from *Prowess*; Robinson from *Rightlynd* (the deliciously jovial and salty Robert Cornelius); and the painfully earnest "woke" white guy Ricky (a pitch-perfect Pat Whalen) from *Exit Strategy*.

Rounding out this impressive cast are James Vincent Meredith as Mallory's love interest Avery; a spastically peppy Tommy Rivera-Vega as Ezekiel, the aspiring rapper; Tony Santiago as Nunley, the affable hustler with questionable business sense; and Aurora Adachi-Winter as the peppy and overbearing entrepreneur Tori. Each of these people is broken in his or her own way, yet they are all united in their loyalty to Mallory.

Since its debut in the 2017 New Stages Festival, the script of *Lottery Day* has changed, making for a stronger story. Several threads and backstories have been trimmed and compressed. Though the ending is a bit too indulgent, unpacking what might have more effectively remained subtext, the new ending offers more catharsis. As the run continues, one hopes the actors will pause for laughs (and there are many) as some lines are lost

RR LOTTERY DAY
Through 4/28: Wed-Thu 7:30 PM, Fri 8 PM, Sat 2 and 8 PM, Sun 2 PM; also Tue 4/16, 7:30 PM, and Sun 4/21, 7:30 PM, Goodman Theatre, 170 N. Dearborn, 312-443-3800, goodmantheatre.org, \$15-\$55.

underneath the uproarious amusement from the audience.

Jason Lynch's stage lighting expertly enhances the terrifying experience of someone reliving a PTSD-triggered trauma, subtly changing from amber to pale blue to deep purple, mirroring Mallory's roiling emotions as she tries to exorcise them by giving away the remainder of her memories. Director Lili-Anne Brown masterfully paces the dialogue, allowing the cast to tumble at breakneck speed into organized cacophony while emphasizing the moments of quiet and fragile anxiety where the indestructible Mallory is rendered vulnerable.

A trademark of Holter's style is how nimbly he telescopes between the broad themes and sophisticated nuances of his subjects. *Lottery Day* is at once a meditation on personal loss and a community grieving its end. It is equally difficult for family and friends to realize that a grieving person may never return to her former self and for a neighborhood to understand that the fight is over and the gentrifiers have won. Sorrow mutates into a perverse competition of bloodletting and point-scoring. Who can claim that they are from the hood? Who turned tail and ran away—or escaped? Who built their success off of the exploitation of another? As things fall apart, "legitimacy" is all that is left with the pain of abandonment and betrayal—and the nagging doubt that it might be impossible to survive without compromise. As Robinson muses, even if one does "make it," what's the point of winning if everyone you wanted to share your success with is gone? *Lottery Day* offers hope on the other side of defeat. As Mallory teaches us through her grand gesture, "The only way out is by making it through."

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RR Does it really get better?

A search for a missing gay teen reveals
The Absolute Brightness of Leonard Pelkey.

American Blues Theater presents the Chicago premiere of this 2016 play by James Lecesne (best known as screenwriter of the 1994 film *Trevor* and cofounder of the Trevor Project, an organization focused on suicide prevention among LGBTQ youth). In this engaging work of theatrical storytelling, originally performed off-Broadway by Lecesne himself, ABT ensemble member Joe Foust portrays multiple roles under Kurt Johns's astute direction. The anchor character is Chuck DeSantis, a hard-boiled, middle-aged detective in a small working-class seaside town in New Jersey, who is investigating a missing person report that, tragically, turns into a homicide case. The victim is a gay 14-year-old boy, Leonard Pelkey, whose inability and unwillingness to tone down his flamboyant personality makes him a target for bullies.

As Chuck narrates the story in classic terse, wryly world-weary fashion ("I'm a detective. . . . The dark side is my beat"), he also takes on the personalities of the witnesses and suspects he interviews, including Leonard's distraught hairdresser guardian, her anxious adolescent daughter, the British-accented director of a community theater group, and a mob widow who finds a key piece of evidence—one of Leonard's homemade rainbow platform sneakers. Following the formula of classic film noir, Chuck's investigation leads him on a moral odyssey to comprehend the nature of good and evil. The focus of the tale is not Leonard himself as much as it is the survivors—those who loved him, those who feared him, and those who never knew him yet are affected by his life and death. Leonard himself never appears except as a blurred image projected on the back wall, but his beaming presence illuminates the story.

The burly Foust illustrates his multiple characters with deftly chosen gestures and vocal inflections, aided by the imaginative contributions of designers Grant Sabin (set), G. "Max" Maxin IV (visual projections), and Eric Backus (sound and music). —**ALBERT WILLIAMS**
THE ABSOLUTE BRIGHTNESS OF LEONARD PELKEY *Through 4/27: Wed-Fri 7:30 PM, Sat 3 and 7:30 PM, Sun 2:30 PM; also Mon 4/15 7:30 PM and Wed 4/24 2:30 PM; no performances Sat 4/13 and 4/27 and Wed 4/17 7:30 PM and Sat 4/20 3 PM, Stage 773, 1225 W. Belmont, 773-654-3103, americanbluestheater.com, \$19-\$39.*

RR Varsity blues

Admissions is a searing indictment of the white liberal elite.

Joshua Harmon's 2018 *Admissions* opens in an administrative office at Hillcrest, an elite prep school in New Hampshire, where two blonde women bicker about the new admissions catalogue. Admissions director Sherri Rosen-Mason (Meighan Gerachis) points out that the images intended to cozen the privileged into throwing down cash for high school en route to an implied Ivy League future fail to represent Hillcrest's current population, which has, under her ministrations, grown to 18 percent students of color. "I don't see color," replies her colleague Roberta (Judi Schindler)—but it's the conversation that ensues, in which Sherri insists on photographs of people "easily identifiable as black or Hispanic," that will make you cringe like a mouthful of

lollipops and a root canal tomorrow. "If I were a terrorist I would blow this place right up," says Ginnie (India Whiteside), whose husband, a teacher at Hillcrest, and son, a student, are black.

Sherri's bubble of dubious liberal ideals stretches thin when Ginnie's son gets into Yale and hers is only waitlisted. Sherri's son, Charlie, uses the language of inclusion to deconstruct its incompatibility with the basic tenets of capitalism and thus the hypocrisy of his white savior parents. Ginnie hates Asians because that's OK. Race is used as a trading card in this play, but the race that's on trial here is the one that invented them all. *Admissions* is a blistering, disturbingly apt critique of how white supremacist ideas blight the white liberal elite. —**IRENE HSIAO** **ADMISSIONS** *Through 5/12: Thu-Sat 8 PM, Sun 3 PM, Theater Wit, 1229 W. Belmont, 773-975-8150, theaterwit.org, \$30-\$42, \$28-\$40 seniors, \$25-\$30 under 30.*

90s nostalgia trip

You could do worse than the stage musical of *Cruel Intentions*.

Fans of both the 1999 film riff on Pierre Choderlos de Laclos's 1782 novel *Les Liaisons dangereuses* and of 1990s pop and rock hits are the obvious target audience for this musical, now in a touring production. Roger Kumble adapted his own movie (which itself was de Laclos by way of Jay McInerney in its portrait of rich dissolute Manhattan private-school kids) with assists from Jordan Ross and Lindsey Rosin.

The paint-by-numbers affair has its charms, but mostly delivers on-the-nose musical interpolations (performed by a live band, it still feels like a 90s karaoke night) as it marches dutifully through the plot points about a pair of stepsiblings steeped in sexual licentiousness and blackmail. When mean girl Kathryn Merteuil (Taylor Pearlstein), belts out Meredith Brooks's "Bitch," it doesn't exactly tell us anything we don't already know about her. Jennifer Weber's choreography feels like a blend of Britney Spears videos (with the short plaid skirts on the schoolgirl ensemble right out of ". . . Baby One More Time") and Bill T. Jones's furniture-leaping motifs from *Spring Awakening*.

It's not compelling stuff, but the cast's energetic commitment (particularly Brooke Singer as hilariously awkward-virgin-turned-sex-enthusiast Cecile, who celebrates being part of the "secret society!" of the carnally initiated) keeps it from feeling like a completely cynical affair. Jeffrey Kringer's libertine Sebastian and Betsy Stewart's good-girl Annette have moments of real chemistry, even when warbling the Cardigans' sugary "Lovefool" to each other. *Cruel Intentions* is slick and self-conscious, like the film, but as 90s nostalgia trips go, you could do worse. —**KERRY REID** **CRUEL INTENTIONS: THE 90S MUSICAL** *Through 4/14: Wed-Fri 7:30 PM, Sat 2 and 8 PM, Sun 2 and 7:30 PM, Broadway Playhouse, 175 E. Chestnut St., 800-775-2000, broadwayinchicago.com, \$35-\$72.*

He's not a racist, but . . .

The Firestorm pulls its punches in its examination of white privilege.

The premise of Meridith Friedman's 2015 drama sounds all too familiar: Patrick, a popular white politician running for a high office and doing well in the polls, may be brought down by revelations of racist behavior in college. As part of a fraternity initiation, he and another white boy spray-painted "Go Home [N-word]" on the door of a black student's dorm room. Now, Friedman



Cruel Intentions 📸 JENNY ANDERSON

invites us to believe, he is being forced to face the consequences of his actions.

What is frustrating about Friedman's play, at least as it has been interpreted in First Folio Theatre's otherwise well-produced show (directed by Rachel Lambert), is that it pulls its punches, taking pains to show that the white male protagonist (played by Steve O'Connell) is really a nice guy—not racist at all!—and that, to some extent, he is being unfairly called to account. In other words, this seems to be the story of a good white man being brought down because one little incident in his youth makes him look like one of the bad ones. (You see, he was forced by his peers to do what he did, and besides he resigned from the fraternity right after the incident.)

To her credit, Friedman touches on some aspects of white privilege—Patrick clearly feels immune to charges of racism because his wife (played with verve and wit by Melanie Loren) is African American—but she annoyingly leaves many other aspects unexplored. She teases us with good questions—why, for example, did Patrick never bother to apologize for his actions when he was still in college?—but never finds time to explore possible answers. Her play is meant to give right-minded audiences a horror-show thrill by forcing them to glance down into America's void, the deep white supremacist assumptions that still undergird our culture. And then she steps back from the brink and changes the subject. —**JACK HELBIG** **THE FIRESTORM** *Through 4/28: Wed 8 PM, Thu 3 PM, Fri 8 PM, Sat 4 and 8 PM, Sun 3 PM, First Folio Theatre, Mayslake Peabody Estate, 1717 W 31st St., Oak Brook, 630-986-8067, firstfolio.org, \$34-\$44, \$29-\$39 students and seniors.*

RR His nose is growing

House Theatre reconfigures *Pinocchio* for the Trump era.

With their adaptation of Carlo Collodi's *Pinocchio*, Joseph Steakley and Ben Lobppries have fashioned a fable about Trump-era nationalism. It's not subtle. At one point, a rabidly ignorant crowd condemns the titular wooden boy with percussive cries of "String him up!" His crime? *Pinocchio* (created by the Chicago Puppet Studio and voiced and manipulated by Sean Garratt)

doesn't come from town, he comes from the forest. And as the tiki-torch-wielding villagers loudly exclaim, nothing good comes from the forest. The Blue Fairy (Karissa Murrell Myers) explains: "They're human. They're afraid of anything they don't understand." Local twit-brained tyrant Doohickey (Kevin Stangler) harnesses that fear, demanding that the forest be burned down, never mind the impact on the environment.

Despite its heavy-handed moments, director Chris Mathews's production works as a picaresque adventure and a tale of resistance and survival in times of oppression. Garratt's *Pinocchio* is a charmer whose fluid movements and precocious-kid antics make you forget the wooden boy is a puppet. Molly Brennan's kind but harshly pragmatic Geppetto is also moving as both a fiercely protective parent and an artist whose work is viewed with suspicion by the local powermongers.

The House's adaptation is loose: There's no happily-ever-after ending with *Pinocchio* turning into a "real boy." Myers's Blue Fairy doesn't sparkle—she's a ragged, haunting specter whose arias fill the air with sorrow (composer Matthew Muñiz's original music is glorious). It's a *Pinocchio* for our time, politicized with a sense of urgency that perhaps Collodi never imagined. —**CATEY SULLIVAN** **PINOCCHIO** *Through 5/19: Thu-Sat 8 PM, Sun 3 PM, Chopin Theatre, 1543 W. Division, 773-769-3832, thehousetheatre.com, \$30-\$50, \$20 students and industry (same-day purchase).*

It's a world of laughter

Small World imagines a disaster on Disney's most annoying ride.

Three Disney World cast members find themselves trapped in the smoldering, electrified remains of the "It's a Small World" ride in Jillian Leff and Joe Lino's darkly comedic 85-minute exercise in tonal irony. Like a theme-park-set contemporary *No Exit*, the trio of clashing personalities—an impaled Mickeyphile (Stephanie Shum), a downtrodden company skeptic (Jackie Seijo), and a conservative, murmuring zealot (Pat Coakley)—work with and against one another to survive an unspecified disaster that's wreaking havoc across the park and maybe the world at large.

One of the New Colony's strengths as a company is that the premise behind each of its new works legitimately feels original and features the sort of creative challenges that require everyone involved in the production to step away from what is easy or expected. Here those include an actor who is floor-bound, an inciting action shrouded in ambiguity, and a looped recording of a song notorious for annoying the hell out of listeners over the course of a 15-minute boat ride—so just imagine the effect after an hour and a half. Director Andrew Hobgood's staging achieves individual moments of grim comedy and otherworldly eeriness—like a survivor using a corpse as a leg weight for ab crunches—but to what end?

The impact isn't as much as you'd think. Leff and Lino's story lightly touches on the merits and liabilities of innocence and optimism, but the backdrop of the largest mega-media conglomerate is mostly underused here as a juxtaposition for the image of burst blood packs. In this loud, mostly prototypical disaster adventure, New Colony dances around juicy topics like culture jamming, capitalism, religious fundamentalism, and anarchy, without committing to any of the above. —**DAN JAKES** **SMALL WORLD** *Through 5/4: Thu-Sat 7:30 PM, Sun 3 PM; also Mon 4/15, 4/22, and 4/29, 7:30 PM, no performance Sun 4/21, Den Theatre, 1331 N. Milwaukee, 773-413-0862, thenewcolony.org, \$20.* 📺

THIS MAGNIFICENT CAKE! ★★★

Directed by Emma De Swaef and Marc James Roels. In French, Dutch, Aka, and Maninka, with English subtitles. 45 min.

OH WILLY . . . ★★★

Directed by De Swaef and Roels. 17 min.

THE BURDEN ★★★★★

Directed by Niki Lindroth von Bahr. In Swedish with English subtitles. 15 min.
Gene Siskel Film Center, 164 N. State,
312-846 2800, siskelfilmcenter.org, \$11.



REVIEW

Puppet show

A program of three short films demonstrates the power of cloth and sticks.

By **ANDREA GRONVALL**

Puppetry is an art form that goes back millennia. Puppets are referenced in the ancient sacred Sanskrit epic the *Mahabharata* and shadow theater is still performed throughout India and southeast Asia, while its influence can be seen in the works of silhouette animators from Lotte Reiniger (*The Adventures of Prince Achmed*, 1926) to Michel Ocelot (*Princes and Princesses*, 2000). Japanese bunraku puppets have been around since the 17th century, about as long as kabuki theater, and are equally suited for the delicate conveyance of complex emotions. First documented in Samuel Pepys’s diaries of 1662 and originally aimed at adults, the hand puppet Punch and Judy shows became prominent in British culture as a form of social satire, later incorporating political commentary (as seen in the introduction of a Hitler character during World War II). These three aspects—the spiritual, the psychological, and the sardonic—combine in a program of three contemporary European stop-action animated puppet films now beginning a week-

long run at the Gene Siskel Film Center.

This Magnificent Cake! (2018), written and directed by Ghent animators Emma De Swaef and Marc James Roels (she’s Flemish; he hails from South Africa), takes its title from the Belgian King Leopold II’s desire for “a slice of this magnificent African cake,” as he expressed it during the 1884-1885 Berlin Conference where the European imperial powers were carving up the African continent into their new colonies. When the Belgian government wouldn’t finance his ambition, he raised his own money to become sole proprietor of the Congo Free State, and grew immensely rich on profits from ivory and rubber. Conscripted as his workforce, the Congolese were by fiat routinely maimed for not meeting production quotas, and over decades millions more were slain.

De Swaef says Belgians don’t much discuss this part of their nation’s past, and if that sounds like an unusual springboard for a weird but touching animated movie, she and Roels arrived at their subject in a circuitous way. As Roels explained in an interview with

This Magnificent Cake!

Chris Robinson for Animation World Network, “I do remember both of us really getting into *Journey to the End of the Night* by Céline and being inspired by that. In one chapter, the main character meets a black servant sitting in the kitchen of a manor making bombs. In another chapter, the main character describes going to an African colony to work and how terrible that was. The one idea that stuck with both of us was that it was nearly always the very worst individuals that Europe had to offer who ended up going to these colonies.”

A feeling of surreal disconnection and an elliptical approach to storytelling distinguish *This Magnificent Cake!*, which is divided into five chapters with different narratives exploring a similar theme, like some anthology films. Foot-long dolls made of felted wool and often shot in close-up evoke recognizably fallible human beings—including King Leopold II himself, given voice by veteran Flemish actor Jan Declair (*The Memory of a Killer*). The royal dotard is a hiccupping bed-wetter who’s oblivious to other people’s feelings because he’s the king, so he can be. After he dismisses a hapless concert clarinetist who got time to play only a few notes, the depressed musician travels to the colonial hotel in the film’s second chapter, where he’s also mistreated. He then wanders off into the nearby jungle, only to pop up again (tragically, for another character) in the fourth. He becomes a kind of a running gag amid all the brutality and misadventure.

The second chapter revolves around a Pygmy who, after tragically losing his wife and children in a fire, is hired by the hotel as a bellhop; when things are slow, he stands in as a hall ashtray for the guests. In this second storyline, another running gag emerges: many bad things occur because of objects rolling and people falling. It’s as though gravity adds insult to the injuries inflicted by callous humans. Other chapters follow a drunken embezzler who flees with his money to the Congo; a Congolese porter who mourns the death of a friend; and an army deserter who seeks a new start in Africa. What’s astonishing is how much emotion the puppets’ fuzzy faces and pillowy bodies convey as the characters stumble and thrash toward their destinies. These mortals are foolish, and we suspect that

we, too, are but a mere slip on a banana peel away from them.

Prior to *This Magnificent Cake!*, De Swaef and Roels were the toast of film fests around the world—including the Chicago International Film Festival, where they won a Silver Hugo—for their delightful stop-action short *Oh Willy . . .* (2012). The title is a pun: it may be the name of the main character, and/or a reference to the part of the male anatomy that’s on fulsome display in the film’s nudist camp setting. After his mother is felled by a stroke, a bereft man returns to the nature-loving commune where she reared him. Although his grief is palpable, as the only clothed person there he’s a fish out of water, giving the filmmakers opportunities to take swipes at cultural fads and mama’s boys. Just for fun, the directors throw in a yeti as well, a surreal element that nonetheless is the perfect capper for this oedipal tale.

Speaking of surreal, I can’t think of any animated film of recent vintage that better captures that disorienting state than *The Burden* (2017), from Swedish writer-director Niki Lindroth von Bahr. A delirious musical send-up of suburban anomie and the discontents of the Scandinavian welfare state system, the stop-action short (which was part of the 2017 edition of the *Animation Show of Shows*) considers a bunch of anthropomorphic animals whose loneliness can be only partly attributed to working the night shift at their various jobs. From the plaintive opening warbles of “Long Time,” sung by a herring in an extended-stay hotel, to the rousing closing gospel-style spiritual “When the Burden is Lifted from My Shoulders” (which has roots in a biblical verse from Isaiah 10:27), the songs reveal the entrapment of these creatures who are isolated in a vast sprawl of office buildings, fast-food restaurants, highways, and parking lots. The sensations generated are akin to those of Duke Johnson and Charlie Kaufman’s animated masterpiece *Anomalisa* (2015)—the characters yearn for meaning and connection, but their repetitive jobs and the banality of their encounters hold no future. In a purely existential sense, the short’s denizens are on the road to nowhere, with literally no exit, as a slow, sweeping zoom out of their town reveals at the end. *The Burden* is a hilariously nutty, disturbing, and yet moving meditation on the human condition—a fugue possibly best explored, as such meditations have been for time immemorial, through puppets. 

★★★★ EXCELLENT ★★★ GOOD ★★ AVERAGE ★ POOR ● WORTHLESS

FILM

NOW PLAYING

RR Alma

A New York performance artist returns home to a small Georgia town to care for her mother, who's suffering a mental breakdown. Ruth Leitman's 1998 documentary slyly underscores the women's exhibitionism as they pour their hearts out to the camera, revealing their troubled psychosexual history. Some of their revelations may be half-truths, while some are shockingly real (the family photo album with its snapshots the artist as a child took of her parents having sex), but in the manner of a southern gothic, they never fail to fascinate. —**TED SHEN** 94 min. *Leitman attends the screening. Sat 4/13, 7 PM. Chicago Filmmakers*

RR N The Best of Enemies

A bevy of sterling performances and writer-director Robin Bissell's crackling screenplay (based on Osha Gray Davidson's nonfiction book, *The Best of Enemies: Race and Redemption in the New South*) propel this civil rights-era drama into the arena of significant American political movies. In an ingenious, dynamic screen pairing, Taraji P. Henson stars as the iron-willed spitfire Ann Atwater, a black activist in 1971 Durham, North Carolina, who reluctantly agrees to chair a town summit on public school desegregation; the chameleonic Sam Rockwell plays her unlikely cochair, C.P. Ellis, a good old boy racist who heads the local chapter of the Ku Klux Klan. They're brought together by an organizer from Raleigh (Babou Ceesay) who specializes in the charrette, a collaborative workshop process in which ideological opponents can solve seemingly insurmountable problems by way of issue clarification, fact-finding, and prolonged close social contact. Through its fine ensemble cast the movie reveals the many gradations of the Durham community: on the side of entrenched white power are a wily politician (Bruce McGill), a smooth but steely town elder (Nick Searcy), and a hothead in a Johnny Reb cap (Wes Bentley), while the voices of moderation and change belong to a Vietnam war veteran (John Gallagher, Jr.), an open-minded black businessman (Gilbert Glenn Brown), and Ellis's wife (Anne Heche). Comparisons will inevitably be made to *Green Book* for its upbeat vibe, but in terms of serious craft and admirable aspirations, this film is more in the league of *42* and *Selma*. —**ANDREA GRONVALL** PG-13, 133 min. *Block 37, Century 12 and CineArts 6, Ford City, Showplace ICON*

N A Bread Factory, Parts One and Two

Patrick Wang's ambitious two-part feature (2018) suggests the cinematic equivalent of a David Foster Wallace novel, employing a wealth of formal devices, ranging from brilliant to precious, to contemplate what it means to live in modern-day America. Set in an idealized but not implausible everytown, it centers on the longtime director of the local arts center (Tyne Daly) and her actress wife (Elisabeth Henry); the expansive story also considers members of the town school board (which has to vote on whether to cut funding to the arts center), the feisty editor of the community newspaper, some visiting artists, and several kids. In the first and superior part, Wang builds on the understated long-take style of his acclaimed *In the Family* (2011) by introducing brazenly theatrical devices (Albee-like mannered dialogue, actors breaking the fourth wall); in the second part, he heads full-throttle into theatricality, with musical numbers and a Greek chorus. Throughout Wang demonstrates he's a

gifted, idiosyncratic director of actors, and his patient affection for many of the characters can be disarming, as when one of the main villains of the first part transforms into a lovable supporting character in the second. —**BEN SACHS** 122 min. *Former Reader film critic Jonathan Rosenbaum introduces the Saturday screening. Fri 4/12, 2 PM; Sat 4/13, 2 PM; and Mon 4/15, 6 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center*

N The Chaperone

Silent film actress and flapper icon Louise Brooks should have been the star of this drama, which captures the launch of her career in jazz-age New York. Instead, the movie hews to a 2012 novel by Laura Moriarty that focuses less on bubbly, 16-year-old Brooks (Haley Lu Richardson) flourishing at a modern dance school in Manhattan than on the timorous, middle-aged chaperone (Elizabeth McGovern) who accompanies her from Kansas. The woman has other reasons for leaving their hometown, but hokey flashbacks and laborious conversations about her issues reveal her story to be half as interesting as her ward's. Written by *Downton Abbey* showrunner Julian Fellowes and distributed by PBS, the film has a sedate TV-movie quality, unbefitting of the roaring era and its *It Girl*. Brooks, given second billing here, deserves her own biopic. —**LEAH PICKETT** 108 min. *Fri 4/12, 2 and 6 PM; Sat 4/13, 5:45 PM; Sun 4/14, 3 PM; Mon 4/15, 7:45 PM; Tue 4/16, 6 PM; Wed 4/17, 8:15 PM; and Thu 4/18, 6 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center*

Les cousins

Charles (Gerard Blain) comes to live with his cousin Paul (Jean-Claude Brialy), falls in love with a fellow student (Juliette Mayniel), but sees her become Paul's mistress in Claude Chabrol's 1959 study of the ill effects of urban sophistication on an uncorrupted country youth. This is Chabrol's second film, and its subtle development of character points toward the dense structures of his later films with their reluctance either to condemn or extol without reservation. In French with subtitles. —**DON DRUKER** 109 min. *Mon 4/15, 9:30 PM. Univ. of Chicago Doc Films*

The Crow

A guitar player, guided by the title bird, comes back to life as a superhero in this 1994 action picture based on James O'Barr's comic book of the same name. Brandon Lee, the lead, died while performing a stunt for the film, and many doubles were used in the remaining footage. Directed by Alex Proyas; with Ernie Hudson and Michael Wincott. —**JONATHAN ROSENBAUM** R, 102 min. 35mm. *Fri 4/12-Sat 4/13, midnight. Music Box*

N A Dark Place

Part psychodrama, part murder mystery, this aptly retitled indie (formerly known as *Steel Country*) stars Andrew Scott as a developmentally disabled single father in a sleepy rust belt Pennsylvania town who suspects that the drowning of a local youngster was no accident. One of Ireland's most compelling actors (his Moriarty in the PBS series *Sherlock*) is the definitive portrayal of the archvillain, Scott here fascinates as a vulnerable yet remarkably resilient odd duck whose complexes are so variegated he's like a walking one-man version of the DSM. To wit: his naive and arrested emotional states lead him to identify with the dead kid and stubbornly needle the cops by buying into the victim's mother's cries of foul play and cover-up. He has obsessive-compulsive tendencies that make him surprisingly suited to the role of amateur detective, but he's prone to hearing voices in his head, which get in his

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READER

way. Most importantly, he functions at the higher end of the autism spectrum, often abrasive among others but capable enough to hold down a trash collector's job, drive a truck, and, as it turns out, exhume a corpse. Simon Fellows directed; with Bronagh Waugh as Scott's pretty coworker, Denise Gough as his trashy ex-lover, and Christa Beth Campbell as his daughter, all of whom think they're smarter than the hero (they're not). —**ANDREA GRONVALL** 89 min. *At Facets Cinéma-thèque. Visit facets.org for showtimes.*

RR Diane

For decades Kent Jones has been one of the most eloquent and perceptive film critics in the U.S.; with this devastating chamber drama (his first narrative feature as writer-director), he also proves himself to be a keen observer of psychology and American social mores. Mary Kay Place, in a heartbreaking performance, plays the title character, a single, 60ish woman in upstate New York who devotes herself to helping the homeless and the terminally ill but can't help her resentful grown son beat his addiction to drugs. Jones doesn't exploit the scenario for simple dramatic irony—Diane is no saint, and her son is to some extent justified in his resentment of her—nor does he steer the story toward predictable emotional payoffs. What he wants to explore is ultimately harder to define—call it the longing for transcendence that's always underpinned American life. His handling of time's passing is subtle and mysterious as well. —**BEN SACHS** 94 min. *At Music Box Theatre. Visit musicboxtheatre.com for showtimes.*

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RR Dust in the Wind

Hou Hsiao-hsien's 1987 Taiwanese feature is less powerful than his preceding *A Time to Live* and *A Time to Die* but much better than his subsequent *Daughter of the Nile*. It follows two young lovers who move to Taipei to find work because they can't afford to finish high school, and slowly but irrevocably their relationship is torn asunder. Hou's feeling for the textures of everyday life, caught mainly in long takes and intricately framed deep-focus compositions, gives this unhurried but deeply affecting drama a deceptively subterranean impact that gradually rises to the surface. The very natural and, for the most part, underplayed performances by nonprofessionals are especially impressive. In Mandarin with subtitles. —**JONATHAN ROSENBAUM** 109 min. 16mm. *Sat 4/13, 7 PM. Filmfront*

La femme infidele

Claude Chabrol's richly ironic 1969 melodrama, in which it is shown that nothing revitalizes a dried-up marriage quite like murder. Not the least of the ironies is that the point is made sincerely and responsibly: when the film's smug, tubby hero kills his wife's lover, he genuinely becomes a richer, worthier individual. The observation of bourgeois life (as practiced in France, where it was perfected) is so sharp and funny that the film ➡

FILM

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often feels like satire, yet its fundamental seriousness emerges in a magnificent last act, and an unforgettable last shot. With Michel Bouquet, Stéphane Audran, and Maurice Ronet. In French with subtitles. —**DAVE KEHR** 1985 98 min. 16mm. Mon 4/15, 7 PM. Univ. of Chicago Doc Films

Fireworks

In this complex flashback narrative that fuses danger, sorrow, and loveliness, detective Nishi (writer-director Takeshi Kitano) is a quiet yet volatile man who takes a road trip with his dying wife, while his partner Horibe (Ren Osugi) trains himself as an artist after being paralyzed on the job. Intercutting between the lonely, productive Horibe and Nishi, whose time with his wife is periodically interrupted by violent face-offs with organized criminals, this 1997 movie is as full of shocking, staccato brutality as meditative calm. Several static compositions presented in satisfying long takes function as serene still lifes, and tight close-ups of sumptuous paintings and drawings (by Kitano), with their saturated colors and surreal yet iconic imagery, are as forceful as the depictions of the gruesome maimings and killings that enable Nishi to keep the future at bay. In Japanese with subtitles. —**LISA ALSPECTOR** 103 min. *Preceded by a 7 PM lecture by Nang Magazine publisher Davide Cazzaro.* Thu 4/18, 8 PM. Filmfront

The G Force

Strong women propel Pamela Sherrod Anderson's documentary, about seniors who step up as primary caregivers for their grandchildren after their children fall prey to mental illness, addiction, domestic violence, incarceration, or sudden death. Ellen Robinson of Chatham rears her teenage grandson, Patrick, with the help of Chicago police officer Denny Perdue, who has steered the boy into swimming and boxing. Georgeanne Fischetti of Lincoln Park took charge of her granddaughter Martha during the girl's infancy, became her guardian a year later, and eventually adopted her at the child's request. This warm, uplifting documentary also introduces the Second Chance Grandparents Writing Group, which offers a creative outlet to stressed caregivers. —**ANDREA GRONYALL** 57 min. *Anderson attends the screening.* Fri 4/12, 6 PM. BBF Family Services **FREE**

Goodbye South, Goodbye

Hou Hsiao-hsien's discursive 1996 drama follows the wanderings of Kao, a small-time gangster with big dreams; his sidekick Flathead; their girlfriends Ying and Pretzel; and a motley cast of characters—including a rural cop and a crooked politician—as they struggle to get ahead. We're treated with splendid shots of the countryside, whose beauty is lost on the protagonists: the land they love is a stagnant backwater of urbanized Taipei despoiled by industrialization. Using intimate vignettes and keeping most of the violence offscreen, Hou opens a fascinating window onto modern Taiwan. In Hokkien and Mandarin with subtitles. —**BERENICE REYNAUD** 116 min. 35mm archival print. Thu 4/18, 7 PM. Univ. of Chicago Doc Films

Hamburger Hill

The three critical questions to be asked of any movie are (1) what does it try to do? (2) does it succeed? and (3) is it worth doing? This film tries to make a conventional, "apolitical" combat story out of one of the most brutal battles fought in Vietnam, and succeeds impressively. Writer/coproducer Jim Carabatsos, drawing on his



High Life

own Vietnam combat experience, trots out most of the clichés we remember from 40s and 50s war films and still manages to give them some ring of truth; director John Irvin leads 14 unknown actors through gritty action sequences and deft ensemble playing (Courtney B. Vance's angry black medic is a particular standout). The question that remains is whether it's worth doing another uncritical war-is-photogenic-hell excursion—accommodating the Vietnam experience to the same unquestioning, grunt-level perspective that sustained us through World War II and Korea while priming us for still more noble sacrifices by steadfastly refusing to look any further. Less pretentious than *Platoon* and more attentive to the Vietnamese than *The Deer Hunter*, this picture proposes with a great deal of skill and sincerity that we honor and respect the men who suffered on our behalf without even beginning to consider why they did so, or to what effect. With a typically banal score by the once-interesting Phil Glass. —**JONATHAN ROSENBAUM** 110 min. Tue 4/16/Thu 4/18, 10:30 PM. Logan

High Life

One reason why every Claire Denis film requires multiple viewings to reveal its true nature is that the French writer-director refuses to repeat herself—her movies may share certain ideas and stylistic tendencies, but each one is elusive in its own way. This English-language sci-fi drama is no exception. The plot moves freely between sequences of an astronaut (Robert Pattinson) caring for a baby girl on an empty space station, flashbacks depicting the astronaut's relationships with his crew mates (who are seen dead at the beginning of the film), and flashes of the characters' lives on earth. As usual Denis circles around her themes (in this case, imprisonment, sexuality, and parenthood) without connecting them in a readily legible manner, forcing viewers to sculpt the poetic associations into a coherent narrative shape. Yet those associations are exciting, beguiling, and sometimes quite moving. Not surprisingly Denis cites Andrei Tarkovsky's *Solaris* (1972) as one of the science-fiction films that inspired her. With Juliette Binoche, Mia Goth, and André Benjamin. —**BEN SACHS** 110 min. *At Music Box Theatre. Visit musicboxtheatre.com for showtimes.*

The Immortal Story

This rarely screened Isak Dinesen adaptation by Orson Welles—his first release in color (1968), originally intended for a never-completed anthology film—is far from one of his most achieved works. But thematically and poetically it exemplifies his late lyrical manner, and it provides clues as to what his most treasured late project—another Dinesen adaptation called *The Dreamers*, for which he shot a few tests—might have looked like.

Set in 19th-century Macao (though filmed modestly in France and Spain), this parablelike tale stars Welles as a lonely and selfish merchant who gets his Jewish secretary (Roger Coggio) to hire a courtesan (Jeanne Moreau) and a sailor (Norman Eshley) to reenact a story. It's awkward yet exquisite. —**JONATHAN ROSENBAUM** 58 min. *Former Reader film critic Jonathan Rosenbaum lectures.* Tue 4/16, 6 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center

Mapplethorpe

In her first scripted feature, documentary filmmaker Ondi Timoner attempts to tell the story of Robert Mapplethorpe, the queer photographer known for his powerful yet controversial black-and-white images of BDSM and gay sex, but Timoner falls short of capturing what made Mapplethorpe so daring. Though the film doesn't shy away from showing his work or some of the traits that made him complicated, like his narcissism or tendency to destroy personal relationships, it refuses to lean into those scenes in a way that would give the story a bit more nuance. Instead, it jams in as many of the important moments in Mapplethorpe's life from 1967 to his death from AIDS in 1989 as it can in an hour and a half, another entry in the list of films (like *Bohemian Rhapsody*) that reduce the career of an iconoclast to a formulaic biopic that refuses to scratch beneath the surface. —**MARISSA DE LA CERDA** 102 min. Fri 4/12, 8:15 PM; Sat 4/13, 3:45 PM; Sun 4/14, 3 PM; Mon 4/15, 8:15 PM; and Thu 4/18, 8:15 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center

Maze

Based on the 1983 breakout of 38 Irish Republican Army inmates from Maze Prison in Northern Ireland, *Maze* is an objective and historically sound screen adaptation. Writer-director Stephen Burke gets so lost in his attempts to recreate history, though, that his depictions of the characters never go below the surface. The film centers on the relationships between the inmates and the wardens—specifically Marley (Tom Vaughan-Lawlor) and Gordon (Barry Ward)—and how they use each other to gain leverage, but there's little sense of character development or motivation past that point. What *Maze* gains in its depiction of history, it loses in emotional strength. The audience is not given much reason to care about anyone from either side, and the buildup to the breakout is drawn out so long that the climax barely hits the mark by the time it gets there. —**CODY CORRALL** 92 min. *At Facets Cinémathèque. Visit facets.org for showtimes.*

Missing Link

Oregon-based stop-motion animation studio Laika (*Coraline, Kubo* and *The Two Strings*) continues to eschew the overstated sentimentality of many kids'

movies with this comic adventure set in the Victorian era. The protagonist, Sir Lionel Frost (voiced by Hugh Jackman), is an aristocratic explorer who hopes to improve his chances of joining an elite adventurers' club when he discovers a Sasquatch, the lovable but lonely Mr. Link, aka Susan (Zach Galifianakis). The film is sophisticated in its revisionist take on the adventure genre, introducing social and ecological concerns into the mix, though its irreverent humor is still accessible to children. Most impressive, however, is Laika's continued commitment to a distinct mise-en-scène, much lighter here than in previous, darker efforts; soft-hued colors and more natural textures further enrich the experience. Chris Butler (Laika's *ParaNorman*) directed; with the voices of Zoe Saldana, Emma Thompson, Stephen Fry, and Timothy Olyphant. —**KATHLEEN SACHS** PG, 95 min. *ArcLight, Century 12 and CineArts 6, Chatham 14, Ford City, Galewood Crossings, River East 21*

Pet Sematary

This newest adaptation proves that, when written and directed with care, there's still life in the world of horror created by Stephen King. Beautifully directed with shots that are both breathtaking and faithful to the original text, this film follows a married couple (Jason Clarke and Amy Seimetz) as they confront demons from the past and present after relocating to a rural town in Maine. Codirectors Kevin Kölsch and Dennis Widmyer's vision of a small town haunted by its own secrets manages to grab your attention from the moment the opening credits fade away, and the actors' perfect comedic timing intertwined with jump scares creates a tense mood that makes even the absurd plausible. The pacing of the film is quick—there's no time to wonder what happens in the everyday life of this family—but by hopping straight to the heart of the dilemma at hand, Kölsch and Widmyer create another classic horror tale that'll leave even the bravest of hearts shielding their eyes. —**ATAVIA REED** R, 101 min. *Block 37, Century 12 and CineArts 6, Ford City, Galewood Crossings, Showplace ICON, 600 North Michigan*

Peterloo

In his historical films (such as *Topsy-Turvy*, *Vera Drake*, and now *Peterloo*), Mike Leigh approaches past eras much like he considers individual lives in his contemporary narratives: by observing a variety of idiosyncrasies until complex wholes emerge. This panoramic look at Manchester in 1819 benefits immensely from Leigh's curiosity about what it might have been like to have lived then. For the first half-hour or so, the director eschews conventional storytelling and just amasses fascinating period details about everything from justice to gender roles to cooking; by the time he introduces the central conflict—between the movement for universal male suffrage and opposing forces in the British government—you feel like you're part of the society that's undergoing it. Leigh valorizes numerous people within the movement and has a grand time satirizing the conservative politicians who want it squashed (his characterization here is almost Dickensian); he also succeeds in the difficult task of making antiquated political rhetoric sound rousing. The film looks fantastic, as Leigh and cinematographer Dick Pope advance a painterly aesthetic even richer than the one they created in *Mr. Turner*. —**BEN SACHS** PG-13, 154 min. *Landmark Century Cinema. Visit landmarktheatres.com for showtimes.*

Pursued

Screenwriter Niven Busch (*The Postman Always Rings Twice*) designed this 1947 film as the first Freudian

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western, and it does handle Freud's "family romance" with an unusual degree of sophistication. But the film is mainly notable as the personal expression of its director, Raoul Walsh, who here found the opportunity to treat his self-creation themes with a new, subjective intensity. The enveloping tone is horror at one's own existence, sublimely expressed through Walsh's deep-focus style, which makes a philosophical challenge of every movement through the elongated frames. With Robert Mitchum, Teresa Wright, and Judith Anderson; strikingly photographed by James Wong Howe. **—DAVE KEHR** 100 min. 35 mm archival preservation print. *Fri 4/12, 7 PM; and Sun 4/14, 1:30 PM. Univ. of Chicago Doc Films*

RR Stop Making Sense

Jonathan Demme's 1984 film of Talking Heads in concert is devoid of the usual rockumentary bull—no "candid" backstage interviews with stammering musicians, no cutaways to blissed-out fans bouncing in the aisles. Instead, it's 88 minutes of solid, inventive music, filmed in a straightforward manner that neither deifies the performers nor encourages an illusory intimacy, but presents the musicians simply as people doing their job and enjoying it. The enlightened humanism of the director of *Melvin and Howard* is evident in every frame. **—DAVE KEHR** 88 min. *Thu 4/18, 9:30 PM. Univ. of Chicago Doc Films*

RR To Have and Have Not

Howard Hawks's 1944 answer to *Casablanca* (which he was originally set to direct but lost to Michael Curtiz) is a far superior film and every bit as entertaining. Humphrey Bogart, the captain of a charter boat in a Nazi-held French colonial port, gradually grows into the Hawksian ethos of action and responsibility as he reluctantly enters World War II in order to protect a rummy (Walter Brennan) and win a woman (Lauren Bacall). In many ways the ultimate Hawks film: clear, direct, and thoroughly brilliant. **—DAVE KEHR** 100 min. 35mm. *Sun 4/14, 11:30 AM, and Tue 4/16, 7 PM. Music Box*

Wayne's World

"Bill & Ted's Aurora Adventures" might almost serve as the subtitle for this very silly but enjoyable 1992 comedy, developed from characters introduced on *Saturday Night Live*—heavy-metal fans (Mike Myers and Dana Carvey) with a cable-access show in Aurora, Illinois. The first feature produced by *Saturday Night Live*'s Lorne Michaels, directed by heavy-metal specialist Penelope Spheeris (*The Decline of Western Civilization*) from a script authored by Myers, Bonnie Turner, and Terry Turner, this has a minimal plot relating to the attempted co-option and exploitation of the lead dudes by evil Chicago entrepreneurs (headed by Rob Lowe), but most of it is just *Hellzapoppin*-style gags, with a nice turn by Tia Carrere as a Chinese-born heavy-metal performer. Smaller parts are doled out to Brian Doyle-Murray, Lara Flynn Boyle, Colleen Camp, Meat Loaf, and Alice Cooper playing himself. **—JONATHAN ROSENBAUM** PG-13, 95 min. *Fri 4/12-Mon 4/15, 11 PM. Logan*

The World of Apu

The final and weakest part of Satyajit Ray's Apu trilogy (begun with *Pather Panchali* and continued with *Aparajito*), this 1959 feature follows Apu through an arranged marriage that unexpectedly blossoms and then ends tragically, followed by a dark period and eventual spiritual regeneration. Though the rhythm of the storytelling is choppy and Apu himself seems incompletely realized, the first appearance of the remarkable Sharmila Tagore as his well-to-do bride uplifts the film's middle section,

and the final scene between the title hero and the son he's never known certainly carries a charge. In Bengali with subtitles. **—JONATHAN ROSENBAUM** 103 min. 35mm archival print. *Wed 4/17, 7 and 9:30 PM. Univ. of Chicago Doc Films*

ALSO PLAYING

N After

Jenny Gage directed this adaptation of Anna Todd's novel about a good-girl college student who begins a relationship with a mysterious bad boy. With Josephine Langford and Hero Fiennes-Tiffin. PG-13, 106 min. *ArcLight, City North 14, River East 21, Showplace ICON*

Auto-Erotic: Female Sexuality in the First Person

A program comprised of Carolee Schneemann's 1967 experimental film *Fuses*, Arthur Ginsberg and Video Free America's 1970-75 experimental documentary *The Continuing Story of Carel and Ferd*, and the late Chicago artist Barbara DeGenevieve's 2004-06 video *Desperado*. 112 min. *Wed 4/17, 7 PM. Northwestern University Block Museum of Art* **FREE**

N Breakthrough

Roxann Dawson directed this Christian-themed film, based on true events, about a teenage boy who survives a near-drowning and the loss of his pulse for 45 minutes. With Chrissy Metz, Josh Lucas, Topher Grace, Mike Colter, Marcel Ruiz, Sam Trammell, and Dennis Haysbert. PG, 116 min. *Block 37, Century 12 and CineArts 6, City North 14, Ford City, Galewood Crossings, River East 21, Webster Place 11*

By the Light of the Silvery Moon

David Butler directed this 1953 comedy-musical starring Doris Day as a young woman in Indiana who is dealing with family issues and an on-again-off-again romance with her newly returned WWI-vet boyfriend. With Gordon MacRae, Leon Ames, Rosemary DeCamp, Billy Gray, and Mary Wickes. 101 min. *Tue 4/16, 9:30 PM. Univ. of Chicago Doc Films*

N Videos by Zachary Epcar

A program of experimental videos (2014-19) by the Milwaukee-based artist. *Epcar attends the screening. Fri 4/12, 7 PM. Museum of Contemporary Art*

Equation to an Unknown

French painter and cabaret owner Francis Savel (under the pseudonym Dietrich de Velsa) directed this 1980 gay porn film about a motorcycle-riding loner who has several sexual encounters. 94 min. *Fri 4/12-Sat 4/13, midnight. Music Box*

N Fiction and Other Realities

A Korean American singer (Bobby Choy) whose career is going nowhere joins a band as a roadie on their tour of Korea, where he falls for a young busker. Bobby Choy and Steve Lee directed. In English and subtitled Korean. 85 min. *Showing as part of the Asian American Showcase. Wed 4/17, 8:15 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center*

Harmful Insect

Akihiko Shiota directed this 2001 Japanese drama about the troubled life of a high school girl. In Japanese with subtitles. 92 min. 35mm. *Sun 4/14, 7 PM. Univ. of Chicago Doc Films*

Hellboy

Neil Marshall directed this re-boot of Mike Mignola's *Hellboy* comics superhero and the 2004 and 2008 films. David Harbour stars. With Milla Jovovich, Ian McShane, Sasha Lane, Daniel Dae Kim, and Thomas Haden Church. *R, 120 min. Block 37, ArcLight, Century 12 and CineArts 6, Chatham 14, Ford City, River East 21, Galewood Crossings, 600 N. Michigan, Webster Place 11*

His Nibs

Gregory La Cava directed this 1921 silent comedy about a rural movie theater. Comedian Chic Sale stars, playing seven roles. With Colleen Moore. 56 min. 35mm archival print. *Live accompaniment by Dennis Scott. Sat 4/13, 11:30 AM. Music Box*

Life Without Death

Director Frank Cole chronicles his attempt to deal with his own fear of death by making a trek across the Sahara Desert in this 2000 Canadian documentary. 82 min. 16mm. *Fri 4/12, 7 PM. Northwestern University Block Museum of Art* **FREE**

N Little

Regina Hall stars in this comedy about a tough businesswoman who is transformed into a 13-year-old version of herself (Marsai Martin). Tina Gordon directed. PG-13, 109 min. *Block 37, ArcLight, Century 12 and CineArts 6, Chatham 14, Ford City, Galewood Crossings, River East 21, 600 N. Michigan, Webster Place 11*

Mirai

Mamoru Hosoda directed this animated Japanese fantasy film about a boy who travels through time with his younger sister as a future, teenage version of herself. In Japanese with subtitles. PG, 100 min. *Sat 4/13, 7 and 9:30 PM; and Sun 4/14, 4 PM. Univ. of Chicago Doc Films*

N Nailed It

Adele Pham directed this documentary about the history and cultural and social significance of Asian nail salons in the U.S. 59 min. *Showing as part of the Asian American Showcase. Pham attends the screening. Sun 4/14, 5:15 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center*

On Power and Play in Virtual Worlds

Critics Dawn Chan and Mary Flanagan participate in an illustrated conversation about the social and political aspects of virtual reality, games, digital art, and software design. *Thu 4/18, 6 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center*

N Penguins

A Disney-produced documentary that follows a penguin during mating season in the Antarctic. Alastair Fothergill and Jeff Wilson directed. G, 76 min. *Century 12 and CineArts 6, Ford City, Navy Pier IMAX, River East 21*

Power of the Press

Lew Landers directed this 1943 crime drama (from a story by Samuel Fuller) about the murder of a newspaper editor. With Guy Kibbee, Lee Tracy, Gloria Dickson, Otto Kruger, and Victor Jory. 64 min. 35mm. *Showing with the Chicago Film Society's recent restoration of Orlando Lippert's 1950 documentary The Editor's Notebook (28 min., 35mm). Wed 4/17, 7:30 PM. Northeastern Illinois University*

Ramy

Three episodes from Ramy Youseff's comedic webseries about the spiritual quest of an Egyptian-American man in New Jersey, played by Youseff. *Youseff attends the screening. Tue 4/16, 7 PM. Univ. of Chicago Doc Films* **FREE**

N Seadrift

Tim Tsai directed this documentary about the tensions and violence between white crab fishermen and new Vietnamese immigrants who take up the same profession in 1970s Seadrift, Texas. 68 min. *Showing as part of the Asian American Showcase. Fri 4/12, 8:15 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center*

N Ulam: Main Dish

Alexandra Cuervo directed this documentary about the recent popularity of Filipino cuisine, focusing on several rising chefs. 90 min. *Showing as part of the Asian American Showcase. Cuervo attends the screening. Sat 4/13, 8 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center* **FI**

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Merchandise at Kokorokoko (center) and Pilsen Vintage & Thrift  GIL LEORA



Remember resale shops this Record Store Day

Thrift and vintage stores are among the best places to find vinyl that nobody's even thought of reissuing yet.

By LEOR GALIL

In June 2012, Seattle reissue label Light in the Attic rereleased *Dreamin' Wild*, a barely heard 1979 private-press album by two brothers from rural eastern Washington, Donnie and Joe Emerson. *Dreamin' Wild* arrived during a banner year for the label, which a month later would release the soundtrack for the surprise hit documentary *Searching for Sugar Man*, about obscure Detroit singer-songwriter Rodriguez (whose music Light in the Attic had begun reissuing in 2008). The Emerson brothers were the subjects of lengthy, glowing profiles in the *Guardian*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and the *New York Times*. The standout track on *Dreamin' Wild*, a blue-eyed soul number called “Baby,” appeared in the 2012 romantic comedy *Celeste and Jesse Forever* and the 2013 dramedy *The Spectacular Now*. Indie-rock misfit Ariel Pink covered “Baby” on his 2012 album *Mature Themes*, when he was at the peak of his fame. But the Emersons never would've had their moment if it hadn't been for a resale shop in Spokane, Washington—that's where record collector Jack Fleischer stumbled upon a sealed 1979 copy of *Dreamin' Wild* in 2008.

Fleischer has said he found the LP in an antique store, but in a 10,000-word opus on the Emerson brothers published in 2016 by *Creative Nonfiction's* monthly spinoff, *True*

Story, *New York Times* features reporter Steven Kurutz calls it a junk shop. In either case, Fleischer paid \$5 for one of the few dozen original copies of *Dreamin' Wild* that had ever left the Emersons' house. Outcomes as spectacular as his are rare, but collectors and DJs routinely seek out music at secondhand shops. In fact, one of New York City's best-loved record shops is a Brooklyn thrift store called the Thing, whose basement holds thousands of unorganized records priced at \$2 apiece.

I often visit vintage, thrift, and charity shops myself in search of cassettes, records, and CDs. It's usually a very different experience from shopping in conventional record stores, whose stock tends to be organized and curated, even though it changes from week to week—I know I can walk into, say, Dusty Groove and find a great, cheap used rap 12-inch in less than ten minutes. Secondhand shops, by contrast, rarely sort or catalog their collections in any way, so that it's futile to take any approach other than “see what you can see.” Such stores are often the last stop records make before the landfill, and browsing their collections can feel like panning for gold in a sandbox. I don't mind spending 15 minutes at a Goodwill, though, digging through battered Herb Alpert discs and high school marching-band LPs—the longer I look, the slimmer the chance I'll find

anything interesting, but even the tiniest chance is worth 15 minutes to me.

Record stores can provide the same thrill of potential discovery, of course, and in case you're looking for an extra reason to visit one, the 12th annual Record Store Day is this Saturday. RSD's founding principle is to support local record stores, but I don't think such support should be confined to shops that stock RSD special releases. Thrift stores can be great places to buy music, even if they devote only a small fraction of their floor space to it.

To prove it, I decided to hit up some local thrift stores. I couldn't visit every one, but I wanted to go to enough to answer some questions: Where do vintage, thrift, and charity shops get their music? How do they present their stock? Are shops in the big thrift chains mandated to carry all the same Barbra Streisand LPs?

Not all the stores answered my questions, unfortunately—if they were part of a larger organization, the process got tangled up in red tape. I wasn't able to set up a time to talk to a representative of the Brown Elephant resale shops, and though I reached Village Discount Outlet's general manager, he didn't respond to my queries before publication. But I did leave every shop with a better understanding of its music selection—and usually a desire to return.

Pilsen Vintage & Thrift

1430 W. 18th, Pilsen

According to Medill Reports Chicago, Pilsen Vintage & Thrift is the largest secondhand store in the neighborhood, and two years ago owner Paul Guizar hired Charly Garcia, cofounder of local Latinx DJ collective and label Sonorama, to manage its music stock. “All the records you see on the first floor, we used to have it in the basement, so I had to dig up all those records,” Garcia says. “I had to go downstairs with a mask.”

Browsing the shop's remarkable selection of vinyl, cassettes, and eight-tracks is more like shopping at a record store than at a typical thrift store. Garcia has cleaned the 12-inches and organized them by genre (funk, world, rock, soul, electronic, hip-hop); at least half the records bear not just price tags but also stickers noting their condition. LPs make up the bulk of the collection, spread out on a few shelving units along with a healthy number of seven-inches.

Garcia says most of the music stock comes from neighborhood folks, some of whom are offloading their vinyl collections because they've been pushed out of Pilsen by gentrification and don't want to move them. People can donate vinyl or try to sell it to the shop, though if they want to get paid, they have to clear a higher bar—Garcia won't buy just anything. “It's mostly people who are there to get some money, just because they don't want those collections,” he says. Pilsen Vintage generally has plenty of Spanish-language discs, and on my trip I saw a handful of seven-inches from Discos Joey, a long-running norteño label based in San Antonio, Texas. Browsing

RECORD STORE DAY 2019 IS SATURDAY, APRIL 13

Visit chicagoreader.com for an interactive map of participating shops and listings of their RSD discounts, giveaways, events, in-store performances, and more.



Cassettes at Kokorokoko (left); Pilsen Vintage & Thrift staffers Stephanie Calderon (center) and Charly Garcia GIL LEORA



The Brown Elephant Resale Shop

5404 N. Clark, Andersonville

The Brown Elephant resells donated items to support Howard Brown Health in its mission to provide care for the LGBTQ+ community. Of the store's three locations (Andersonville, Lakeview, and Oak Park), I went with the northernmost one. I'd been before, and remembered its music selection as respectable—much larger than at the Lakeview store.

Records, cassettes, and CDs don't appear on the Brown Elephant's online list of items that it says it accepts—but they're not barred either. If you're not specifically hunting for

music at the Andersonville shop, you could easily miss its designated space near the register on your way into the cavernous former ballroom that serves as the shop's main space. It holds a small shelf whose six compartments are mostly full of vinyl, with three crates of records stacked on top of it and bookshelves of DVDs on either side. I noticed some decent CDs—plus an obviously homemade CD-R copy of U2's *Zooropa* with "Pirated Limited Ed." handwritten on its spine—but I focused my attention on the store's hodgepodge of unorganized records, which all sell for \$1.

I found more delights than dreck, though some of the stock was definitely everyday thrift-store rubbish—I can't imagine who might want three records by Charlie Rich (the guy who did "Behind Closed Doors")

but doesn't already have them. Bear in mind, however, that you're listening to someone who's entertained by seemingly worthless private-press LPs—at the Brown Elephant, for instance, I found *Yale Sings*, an old compilation of the school's vocal groups that I would've bought if the vinyl had been a little less scratched up. I considered a radio-station copy of AC/DC's *Powerage* and a slightly water-damaged edition of Funkadelic's *America Eats Its Young*, but I left with just a clean copy of *Real Drugs*, a 2014 EP by defunct local garage-rock group Party Bat.

Kokorokoko

1323 N. Milwaukee, Wicker Park

When Kokorokoko co-owner Ross Kelly decided to open a vintage store focused on the 80s and 90s, he modeled it after the Boston-based chain he'd worked at in the late 90s: Newbury Comics, which carries not just comics and graphic novels but also music, toys, and pop-culture ephemera. Kokorokoko sells mostly clothing, though music—dance, hip-hop, vintage metal—has played a major role in its identity and history. When the shop opened in 2009, it was a few blocks away at 1112 N. Ashland, and Kelly says it got lots of customers who were on trips to Dusty Groove just to the north—and about a quarter of the people who came in did so to buy dance records.

"We do still carry a lot of 12-inch singles, 'cause we're DJs," Kelly says. "That's what separates us from a multipurpose record store or something like a thrift store, which is 100 percent broad spectrum—where you're like, 'Oh, there's an Andy Williams record and there's a DJ International acid-house or hip-house record in here too.' We're working the same lane in a way, but we're distilling all the Andy Williams records and Herb Alpert records out of the mix."



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Stephanie Calderon of Pilsen
 Vintage & Thrift (above) and
 Kokorokoko co-owner Ross Kelly
 GIL LEORA



continued from 27

Kokorokoko's inventory of cassettes and records reflect the shop's affection for the 90s, like the bulk of the rest of its offerings—band T-shirts, heavy-metal trading cards, buttons. Unlike most thrift stores, Kokorokoko doesn't accept donations—Kelly and co-owner Sasha Hodges travel around the midwest buying stuff, and the size of their music collection fluctuates based on what they find. "Two, three years ago, there was a lot of people coming here just to buy cassettes—we had probably 1,000 of them out on the floor at one point," Kelly says. "At that point, maybe 15 percent of people coming in were just coming in for the cassettes."

The cassettes are displayed in the shop's entryway, while its small selection of records shares the main space with the clothes. I spend too long staring at a sealed copy of "You've Been Messin' Around," a local hip-house 12-inch that Delle Del & Jamin Jack Starling released on Basement Records in 1990—it's a decent deal at \$12, but I can't pull the trigger on it.

Village Discount Outlet Store 1

6419 S. Kedzie, Chicago Lawn

If you've spent much time thrifting in Chicagoland, you've probably gone to one of its 12 Village Discount stores. I decided to visit the southernmost location in the city—the

only outlets further south than the Chicago Lawn Village Discount are in Chicago Heights and Hammond, Indiana. Clothes take up the great majority of the store, and the records occupy one corner of a room marked "miscellaneous." Short stacks of sleeveless seven-inches are threaded through their center holes onto two long horizontal hooks sticking straight out from the wall, above a shelving unit full of old binders, photo albums, and two deep rows of LPs.

There are few enough records that you can see everything in less than 15 minutes, though the selection is fairly run-of-the-mill. I spot some Lawrence Welk, some concerto LPs I don't remember anything else about, a bunch of John Denver, and two copies of Jud Strunk's 1973 country album, *Daisy a Day*. I'm not in the market for a used copy of Marvin Gaye and Kim Weston's 1964 seven-inch "What Good Am I Without You" b/w "I Want You 'Round," but it still breaks my heart to find a copy with a chunk knocked out of its edge.

I end up leaving with weathered copies of the Association's *Insight Out* and the 1955 single "In the Year of Our Love" b/w "Hey! Ba-Ba-Re-Bop" by west-side singer Lola Dee. I also buy the empty sleeve from the split LP *We're Pullin' Together* by the Downtown Sound and the Music Company, released in 1986 by local indie polka label Bel-Aire (like I said, I'm a sucker for odd private-press releases). All the store's LPs and seven-inches sell for \$2, but since *We're Pullin' Together* has no vinyl, I get a discount.



At Kokorokoko, they love the 80s.

© GIL LEORA

Another Man's Treasure Resale

5444 S. Damen, Back of the Yards

Wilburn Green came to Chicago in 1979, and he says he opened Another Man's Treasure 18 years ago—by then he'd already been going to thrift stores for decades with his family. Before he entered the secondhand business himself, Green remembers, he had a cousin who'd refurbish discarded mattresses and box springs and sell them. "I knew then that the saying is true—one man's trash is another man's treasure," he says.

Green's store is near the southern edge of Back of the Yards, and it originally occupied almost all of its freestanding building—he displayed loads of furniture and knickknacks throughout a storefront and a large banquet hall connected to it. But about a decade ago, Green decided to turn the hall into a functional events space—it already had a small stage, and Green owned the furniture and gear to do the rest. He dubbed the space the Ambrosia Room (currently it hosts blues sets on Thursday nights), and he stuffed all the stock for Another Man's Treasure into the storefront. "That's why I've got so much piled up," he says.

Green gets a lot of stock from people in nearby neighborhoods—senior citizens trying to downsize or just people donating things they don't want. He also has a connection at a local U-Haul storage facility, and occasionally he bids on the contents of abandoned lockers sight unseen. "Winning the auction, you have to take everything that's in there," he says. "The last two times I've been over there, it's garbage—I learned earlier that if you enjoy

the fragrance of a rose, you have to accept the thorns that it bears."

About 20 percent of the inventory at Another Man's Treasure is music, Green estimates, though most of it is out of sight. With the exception of a small cassette selection, it's in a closet-size room behind a DJ booth in the Ambrosia Room. Inside the room, a wooden shelving unit takes up an entire wall, stretching from floor to ceiling, and holds hundreds of records—mostly 12-inches, with smaller stacks of seven-inches and 78 RPM records. A turntable tipped vertically balances precariously atop a haphazard stack of vinyl. Green says most of the people interested in buying music from him own record stores or sell music themselves, and they generally call ahead. Few walk-ins want to rummage through a closet of LPs.

Another Man's Treasure provides a real digging experience. My hands get dirty flipping through the unorganized records, and I have a strong feeling I might discover a real treasure—maybe because this collection is clearly less picked over than most. Unfortunately, a lot of what I pull looks like the typical stock of an old record shop: a weathered copy of Big Brother & the Holding Company's *Cheap Thrills*, Ray Charles's *Modern Sounds in Country and Western Music Volume 2*. After about 20 minutes, I get overwhelmed. I grab decent copies of 1973's *Love Is the Message* by Philadelphia soul-disco band MFSB and 1986's *Get Busy 1 Time!* by New York City rap group Full Force. I add five odd cassettes—including a homemade dance mix from 1988, a sermon from 1982, and a couple private-press releases—and my total comes to \$3. That is, until I return. 

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PICK OF THE WEEK

Doom pioneers Electric Wizard worship at the altar of horror films, stoner culture, and Black Sabbath



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ELECTRIC WIZARD

Mon 4/15, 8 PM, Riviera Theatre, 4746 N. Racine, \$35. 18+

YOU CAN'T ACCUSE British doom pioneers Electric Wizard of forgetting their roots—after 25 years and eight full-lengths, their Black Sabbath worship shows no signs of abating. They even titled their latest record *Wizard Bloody Wizard* (Spinefarm/Witchfinder), for hell's sake. They also haven't wavered one bit from the aesthetic laid down by singer and guitarist Jus Osborne, the band's sole remaining original member, in their earliest days: heavy riffs, morbidity, horror films, and drug jokes. But Black Sabbath changed it up and branched out much more than they're generally given credit for, and so too have Electric Wizard. Second guitarist Liz Buckingham, who joined the band in 2003, has contributed to a relatively lithe and up-tempo sound (at least compared to the crushingly slow doom of their first decade), and if *Wizard Bloody Wizard* received mixed reviews for having a lighter touch than its predecessors, well, Sabbath's 1978 album *Never Say Die!* got the same treatment, and it's likewise better than people said it was at first. "Necromania" has a sly sexy edge, and 11-minute closer "Mourning of the Magicians" goes out on a grandiose epic roar. For this tour, Electric Wizard are joined by bassist Haz Wheaton, who played with Hawkwind from 2015 till 2018. —**MONICA KENDRICK**

THURSDAY11

XENO & OAKLANDER *Odonis Odonis and Public Memory* open. 8:30 PM, *Empty Bottle*, 1035 N. Western, \$12. 21+

Brooklyn duo Xeno & Oaklander (aka Sean McBride and Liz Wendelbo) have been blending electronic experimentation with pop music for five full-length albums and more than a decade, layering strange synths with hushed, hook-driven vocals. McBride and Wendelbo have pushed their sonic minimalism in many directions, including stark cinematic soundscapes and heady drones, but on the brand-new *Hypno* (their first album for Dais), they try shaking off their fascination with challenging sounds to take a stab at straightforward dance pop. Their true colors still shine through the album's melodic turns, though: the beats glitch more than pound, the vocals feel disconnected and foreign, and an eerie murk hovers above the whole record. It all adds up to a fun, addictive record—Xeno & Oaklander are just as good at making you move as they are at making you think. —**LUCA CIMARUSTI**

FRIDAY12

CAPTAIN BEYOND See also *Sunday. Furr* opens. 7 PM, *Reggie's Music Joint*, 2105 S. State, \$30, sold out. 21+

As much as I love the music of eras past, I'm pretty skeptical of band reunions—especially when the number of founding or classic-era members begins to dwindle. Case in point: 1970s cosmic rockers Captain Beyond are still touring, but drummer Bobby Caldwell is the only original member aboard. Caldwell played on the first and last of the band's three proper LPs, leaving after their 1972 self-titled debut to join hard rocker Rick Derringer (of "Rock and Roll, Hoochie Koo" fame) on 1973's *All American Boy* and then returning to Captain Beyond for the disappointing 1977 LP *Dawn Explosion*. Don't get me wrong, I'm not complaining about Caldwell as a drummer: he also started proto-metal outfit Armageddon with former Yardbird Keith Relf, played in Johnny Winter's band during its seminal era, and jammed with the likes of Duane Allman, Eric Clapton, John Lennon, and Ringo Starr. Caldwell formed Captain Beyond in Los Angeles in 1971 with recently fired Deep Purple vocalist Rod Evans, former Iron Butterfly members Larry "Rhino" Reinhardt (guitar) and Lee Dorman (bass), and keyboardist Lewie Gold. The band played a dizzying mix of styles, loading their catchy tunes with extended jams that wrapped Latin rhythms, jazz, and more in a heady space-rock sheen—and their famous cosmic-pirate album covers let listeners know to expect a strange trip (it's a hologram on the first LP, dude!). Their self-titled debut hit number 134 on the *Billboard* charts, no small feat for a challenging collection of largely interconnected proggy suites by a stoney "supergroup" of mostly unknown sidemen. Their second, more streamlined LP, 1973's *Sufficiently Breathless*, cracked *Billboard*'s top 100, but by then Captain Beyond were a mess—infigting had caused several lineup changes, and their label, Capricorn,

increasingly pressured them to be more "southern" (like their biggest signees, the Allman Brothers), leading to a breakup later that year. (In 1976 the band re-formed without Evans, but that version likewise lasted only a couple years.) Evans left the music biz long ago to work in respiratory therapy, and Dorman and Reinhardt both died in 2012 (after taking part in many Captain Beyond reunions). So Captain Beyond 2019 is Caldwell and some hired guns—most of whom have only been with him for a few years. Recent YouTube footage shows the current lineup sounding blues-based, earthbound, and pedestrian—not unlike Cactus, which Caldwell joined for a sec in the early 70s (replacing Carmine Appice). Seemingly gone are the spacey synths, odd time signatures, and raging guitar tones—and definitely gone are all the other musicians who originally made the band great. Friday's show is sold out, though, so I guess the hard-core fans don't much care. This longtime Captain Beyond enthusiast will probably just crank the first LP on headphones at home instead. —**STEVE KRAKOW**

LEE FIELDS & THE EXPRESSIONS *Neal Francis* opens. 8:30 PM, *Thalia Hall*, 1807 S. Allport, \$20-\$28. 17+

The recording career of Lee Fields extends at least as far back as 1969, but he was considered little more than a footnote in R&B history until the late 1990s and early 2000s, when he emerged as a latter-day roots-soul celebrity. Cast initially as a James Brown-style funk artist, Fields landed his sole chart hit, "Stop Watch," in 1986, and though he enjoyed moderate success on the 90s southern soul-blues circuit, he was scuffling in semi-anonymity a few years later when the retro-soul crowd caught up with him. This led to a string of highly acclaimed albums on aficionados' labels such



Lee Fields © SESSE LIND

as Desco, Truth & Soul, Daptone, and, most recently, Big Crown. The audience for Fields's style of music loves the type of heart-ripping soul ballad that just happens to be his true metier: he sings with the classic soul combo of muscularity and tenderness, summoning a coarse-edged, deeply textured croon, achingly vulnerable but girded with just enough sinew to avoid becoming cloying. On his latest recording, *It Rains Love* (Big Crown), Fields is backed by a vintage-sounding studio crew, and he pours it on with more fervor than ever—demonstrating his soul balladeer's knack for summoning power from even the tritest conceits ("It rains love when I'm with you / You're my sun when the clouds roll through"). And Fields has finally found his way onto mainstream contemporary playlists via big-eared hip-hop producers: He's been sampled for songs by

the likes of Travis Scott, A\$AP Rocky, J. Cole, and Jeremih. Scott included a Fields sample on "Antidote," the second single off his 2015 debut, *Rodeo*—which gave Fields's voice its first appearance on the charts in almost 30 years. —DAVID WHITEIS

O.R. THEY? *Defcee opens. 10 PM, Subterranean downstairs, 2011 W. North, \$10. 21+*

Hip-hop has a great way of encouraging nerdiness. By that I don't mean nerdcare, a rap subgenre so

focused on geek culture that it reeks like a Trekkie who's stayed at C2E2 too long to shower between days. I'm talking about how accepting the hip-hop community can be of people who are singularly focused on cultural artifacts that the outside world considers niche at best. Which brings me to Chicago rap duo O.R. They?, easily the world's best hip-hop homage to director Wes Anderson. Jed Sed and Walter J. Liveharder named their project after a line from *Rushmore*: it's what protagonist Max Fischer considers a witty response to the O.R. scrubs worn by an imagined romantic ➔

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Soul Train Uncovered

In Szold Hall

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 17 8PM

Darlingside with special guest
 Lula Wiles

FRIDAY, APRIL 19 8PM

Jane Siberry In Szold Hall

FRIDAY, APRIL 26 8PM

Jonas Friddle

Album Release Celebration for The Last Place to Go
 with special guest Sons of the Never Wrong

SATURDAY, APRIL 27 7PM

**Erwin Helfer /
 Elsa Harris /
 Pastor Donald Gay**

plus a special film screening of an interview
 and performance between Erwin Helfer &
 Mama Yancey • In Szold Hall

SUNDAY, APRIL 28 3PM

May Flower In Szold Hall

WEDNESDAY, MAY 1 8PM

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Omara Portuondo

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SATURDAY, MAY 4 7:30PM

Michael J. Miles

A Pete Seeger Centennial Celebration:
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4/12 Global Dance Party:
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Sunn ANSON FUNDERBURGH
 In The SideBar - Fletcher Rockwell

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SAT 20 Celebrate 4/20 With A
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WED 24 Austin, TX
 Songwriter / Producer **WILL KIMBROUGH**
 w/ special guest **SAM LEWIS**

Thu, April 25 - Country Night In Berwyn

Fri, April 26 - American English

Sat, April 27 - The Lotus Kings (Santana Tribute)

Wed, May 1 - Billy Prine / Juliet & Michael Dinallo

Fri, May 3 - Satsang

Sat, May 4 - The Imperial Sound / Real Pretenders

Fri, May 10 - The Big Lagniappe

Thu, May 16 - Jenny Bienemann Book Release Party

Fri, May 17 - The Mudmen (Pink Floyd Tribute)

Sat, May 18 - Luke Winslow-King / The Dales

Fri, May 24 - The Zimmermen Do Dylan

Sat, May 25 - The Belvederes / Bart Alonzo

MUSIC

continued from 31
rival. But while Jed and Walter are clearly enamored with Anderson, they're not hamstrung by their fandom. On their new self-released EPs, *Either They Can't Hear Us*, or *They Don't Understand Vol. 1* and *2*, the duo deploy a barrage of pop-culture references (only occasionally to Anderson movies) to color their vision of Chicago—a place where locals still call the tallest building the Sears Tower and where Wicker Park officially died with the closing of Rodan in 2015. And whether or not your take on the city lines up with theirs, it's hard not to be charmed by O.R. They?'s wacky, rubbery raps and self-deprecating lines about falling asleep to *Point Break*. —**LEOR GALIL**

PORTLAND CELLO PROJECT 8 PM, SPACE, 1245 Chicago Ave., Evanston, \$17. 🎫

The Portland Cello Project was created in 2006 to bring the cello into new spaces and pair it with unlikely source material, and it's since juxtaposed a wide variety of reconfigured pop, rock, and rap songs with Western classical arrangements—contrasting Kanye West with J.S. Bach, for instance, or Pantera with Arvo Pärt. The group tweaks its instrumentation from show to show, adding horns, guitar, bass, drums, vocals, and more, but whatever its lineup, it makes for a sight to behold and a sound to relish, often with more than ten cellists onstage



Squirrel Nut Zippers 📸 SKH MUSIC

together. The Portland Cello Project has recently been performing Radiohead's *OK Computer* in its entirety in large theaters, with backing from an orchestral ensemble. But for its spring tour, the PCP is scaling back to a small group that features singer Patti King (a touring member of the Shins), drummer Tyrone Hendrix (Prince, Stevie Wonder), and trumpeter Farnell Newton (Bootsy Collins, Jill Scott) to play Radiohead tunes as well as selections from Bach and John Coltrane. Trying new things is characteristic of the group, and tonight's dynamic, adventurous set (in the intimate confines of Evanston's SPACE) promises to be more improvised than a typical PCP performance. —**SCOTT MORROW**

SATURDAY13

PIXEL GRIP *Grun Wasser, Cameron Traxx, and DJ Ariel Zetina open. 9 PM, Sleeping Village, 3734 W. Belmont, \$12. 21+*

Local multimedia collective and label Feeltrip has carved out a niche releasing music by outre indie-pop bands and far-out dance artists, including one group who do a great job bridging those worlds: Pixel Grip. The Chicago three-piece meld indie-pop songwriting with electronic music's insistent, seemingly infinite grooves; the tunes on their new

debut, *Heavy Handed*, sound like they were made to start mosh pits in grimy rock clubs and get people sweating at all-night dance parties in unfinished lofts. Front woman Rita Lukea sings with a mischievous edge that helps the band's sprawling, glistening synths and rumbling percussive patterns suggest both dreams and nightmares—and even a subtle shift could produce a dramatic swing in either direction. The joyous, sweltering single “Diamonds” pairs crystalline melodies with an irresistible thump so perfectly that you'll wonder how you ever spent a summer night without it. —**LEOR GALIL**

SQUIRREL NUT ZIPPERS 7 PM and 9:30 PM, SPACE, 1245 Chicago Ave., Evanston, both shows sold out. 🎫

You wouldn't be alone if your first response to a Squirrel Nut Zippers concert listing was to wonder, “Are they still around?” Ardent fans excepted, listeners mostly lost track of the Zippers after their late-90s heyday—but the show ain't over yet. The Squirrel Nut Zippers formed in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, in 1993 (taking their name from a brand of old-time candy) with six members, including James “Jimbo” Mathus and his wife at the time, Katharine Whalen. With the release of their sophomore album, *Hot*, in 1996, the band rose to fame as part of the swing-band craze of the era, along with the likes of Royal Crown Revue and Big Bad Voodoo

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4.15	GLENN JONES
4.18	GRAHAM PARKER WITH ADAM EZRA
4.20	BRAD WILLIAMS
5.2	DEL MCCOURY BAND WITH MILE TWELVE
5.6-7	NANCY AND BETH STARRING MEGAN MULLALLY AND STEPHANIE HUNT
5.8	MARIZA
5.11	THE SUGARHILL GANG

UPCOMING SHOWS

4.19	CARBON LEAF
4.21	DAVE DAVIES
4.22	MAGGIE SPEAKS: YACHT ROCK NIGHT
4.25-27	ERIC ROBERSON
4.28	CHICAGO PHILHARMONIC: PINOT AND PIANO
4.29	BIG SUIT -TALKING HEADS TRIBUTE
4.30	PJ MORTON - FEAT. THE AMOURS
5.1	JACK DEJOHNETTE, JOE LOVANO, ESPERANZA SPALDING & LEO GENOVESE
5.4-5	HERB ALPERT & LANI HALL
5.10	GRIFFIN HOUSE
5.10	BURLESQUE NIGHT OUT 10:30 PM SHOW
5.12-13	THE NILS LOFGREN BAND
5.14	LIZZ WRIGHT
5.15	DAVID BROMBERG QUINTET
5.16	HOWIE DAY
5.17	SARA EVANS & THE BARKER FAMILY BAND - BLOODLINE TOUR

APR 16 + 17

MARC BROUSSARD

APR 23

A PURPLE TOUCH: LIV WARFIELD HONORS PRINCE

APR 24

RHONDA ROSS & RODNEY KENDRICK

APR 28

KEVIN EUBANKS GROUP

32 CHICAGO READER • APRIL 11, 2019

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THE SECRET HISTORY OF CHICAGO MUSIC

PIVOTAL CHICAGO MUSICIANS THAT SOMEHOW HAVE NOT GOTTEN THEIR JUST DUES by PLASTIC CRIMEWAVE

POST-WINTER BLUES



LOUIS MYERS

IT DOESN'T RELIABLY FEEL LIKE SPRING YET, SO SHOCMA IS DOING ONE MORE (POST-) WINTER BLUES STRIP. GUITAR & HARMONICA MASTER LOUIS MYERS PLAYED A KEY ROLE IN THE 1960S EVOLUTION OF CHICAGO BLUES FROM ITS RAW DELTA ROOTS INTO SOMETHING MORE SOPHISTICATED & URBAN. BORN SEPTEMBER 18, 1929, IN SYNAUA, MISSISSIPPI, HE MIGRATED HERE WITH HIS FAMILY IN 1941. THEY SETTLED NEXT DOOR TO BLUES LEGEND LONNIE JOHNSON, WHO INSPIRED LOUIS—AS DID HIS GUITAR-PLAYING OLDER BROTHER DAVE, WHO'D BECOME ONE OF THE GENRE'S 1ST ELECTRIC BASSISTS. ANOTHER MYERS BROTHER, BOB, PLAYED HARMONICA AND KNEW GUITARIST OTHUM BROWN, WHO ENLISTED LOUIS TO PLAY HOUSE PARTIES WITH HIM. LOUIS WENT ON TO WORK WITH ARTHUR "BIG BOY" SPIRES, AND AROUND 1950 HE TEAMED UP WITH DAVE & HARMONICA PLAYER JUNIOR WELLS AS THE THREE DEUCES (LATER THE THREE ACES). SHORTLY AFTER THE TRIO ADDED DRUMMER FRED BELOW TO BECOME THE FOUR ACES, EVENTUALLY KNOWN SIMPLY AS THE ACES—A GROUND-BREAKING AND INFLUENTIAL BAND THAT ADDED A CLASSY JAZZ ELEMENT TO THE BLUES. IN 1952 WELLS LEFT TO JOIN MUDDY WATERS'S GROUP TO BE REPLACED BY THE EQUALLY LEGENDARY LITTLE WALTER, WHO WAS BACKED BY THE ACES ON CLASSIC TRACKS SUCH AS "MEAN OLD WORLD" AND "TELL ME MAMA." LOUIS LEFT IN 1954 BUT REMAINED AN IN-DEMAND SIDEMAN, JAMMING WITH OTIS RUSH & EARL HOOKER, AND IN 1956 HE RECORDED HIS OWN 45, "JUST WHALING," B/W "BLUESY." LOUIS CUT 2 TRACKS FOR THE DELMARK COMPILATION "SWEET HOME CHICAGO" (ACCOMPANIED BY GODLIKE GUITARIST MAGIC SAM) AND IN THE 70S HE TOURED EUROPE WITH THE REFORMED ACES, BACKING VARIOUS BLUES STARS. LOUIS ALSO GOT TO SHINE AS A BANDLEADER ON LPS SUCH AS, 1978'S "I'M A SOUTHERN MAN" AND 1983'S "WAILIN' THE BLUES." ON HIS FINAL RELEASE, 1991'S "TELL MY STORY MOVIN'," HE'D JUST SUFFERED A STROKE & COULD ONLY PLAY HARMONICA. HIS HEALTH DECLINED, AND AFTER HE DIED IN CHICAGO ON SEPTEMBER 5, 1994, HIS OLD BANDMATE JUNIOR WELLS HELPED BUY HIS HEADSTONE.

TUNE INTO THE RADIO VERSION OF "THE SECRET HISTORY OF CHICAGO MUSIC" ON "OUTSIDE THE LOOP" ON WGN RADIO 720AM, SATURDAY AT 6AM WITH HOST MIKE STEPHEN. COMMENTS, IDEAS TO p12sticcw@hotmail.com ARCHIVED @ OUTSIDETHELOOPRADIO.COM

Daddy. The Zippers drew inspiration from musicians such as Cab Calloway and Tom Waits, and they also distinguished themselves by crossing genres (sometimes adding elements of calypso or klezmer) and turning their videos and freewheeling live sets into mesmerizing spectacles. *Hot* went platinum, and its catchy lead single "Hell" brought the band appearances on late-night shows, regular play on MTV, and invitations to perform at the 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta and at President Clinton's 1997 inaugural ball. But the Zippers' subsequent albums didn't chart nearly as well, and by the end of the decade interest in swing music had largely fizzled out. Over the next few years things got messy: Mathus and Whalen divorced and band members ended up mired in arbitration over royalties. Eventually Whalen went on to a solo career, Mathus collaborated with musicians such as Buddy Guy, Luther Dickinson, and Alvin Youngblood Hart, and the rest of the band

scattered (though some original members, including Mathus and Whalen, reunited in 2007 for a tour and live album before going on hiatus again). For the 20th anniversary of *Hot* in 2016, Mathus, who now lives in Mississippi, revived the Squirrel Nut Zippers with a slew of new faces from New Orleans but the same carnivalesque approach, and in 2018 the band released the album *Beasts of Burgundy* (Southern Broadcasting). *Beasts* is a stew of horns, fiddles, upright bass, banjo, blues guitar, and piano, weaving in Dixieland, swing, vaudeville, blues, and other styles, with more than a nod to the Crescent City. But the band's music really needs to be heard live to be appreciated; their shows are equal parts burlesque, performance art, and circus, with Mathus as ringleader of a nine-person lineup that occasionally strolls through the audience like a second line—it's like being transported to Congo Square by a bunch of carnies. —KIRSTEN LAMBERT

THEE CASUAL HEX North by North, Tomblands, and Rainbow James open. 6:30 PM, Subterranean, 2011 W. North, \$8. 17+

Nothing has made me feel quite as old and irrelevant as my 15-year-old son telling me he hates the Beatles. He insists that their music is simplistic, boring, and unlistenable; he'd rather listen to current-day genre-bending experimental groups such as Clipping., Watsky, and Iggorrr. But if the Fab Four are no longer cutting-edge, no one told Chicago rockers Thee Casual Hex (not to be confused with Seattle postpunk band Casual Hex). Their 2018 self-titled debut on Midwest Action sports red, flowery, psychedelic cover art and equally retro hooks. Album highlight "When I Was With You" shamelessly cribbs a guitar riff from "Day Tripper"—because if you can crib from "Day Tripper," why wouldn't you? Alice Karynak's vocals are mixed a bit further down than they would've been back in the day, which gives the song a rough-and-ready punk feel as the bandmates lean their heads together to add those familiar vocal harmonies. "I Want to Be Loved" gets its licks from "Taxman" and the heavier, more stoned end of the 60s, while "Delilah" throws some Jefferson Airplane influence into the mix. I doubt my son would be won over, but for those of us who still have some affection for John, Paul, George, and Ringo, it's nice to hear a young band keeping the spirit of the music—not to mention its rubber soul—alive. —NOAH BERLATSKY

SUNDAY14

CAPTAIN BEYOND See Friday. Keith Scott & the Electric Blues Junkies open. 7 PM, Reggie's Music Joint, 2105 S. State, \$30. 21+

ELKHORN The Shippy/Wyche Duo opens. 9 PM, Elastic Arts, 3429 W. Diversey, \$10. 18

John Fahey first incorporated psychedelia into his American Primitive approach to acoustic guitar in 1966, when he ran the tape backward on "Knot's Berry Farm Molly." Cosmic-minded pickers have been combining the two styles ever since, and these days no one does it better than Elkhorn. New Yorker Drew Gardner and Pennsylvanian Jesse Sheppard have been playing together under that name since 2013, but their personal and musical association stretches back to the 1980s—which helps explain the ease and flexibility of their rapport. They achieve an intricate weave of complementary tones on "Sugar Hill Raga," one of the duets on their vinyl debut, 2017's *The Black River* (Debatle). On their new twin LPs, *Sun Cycle* and *Elk Jam* (both on Feeding Tube), Sheppard's acoustic fingerpicking keeps up a steady flow of radiant sonorities and gamboling rhythms, the latter of which are periodically bolstered by the shuffling beats of visiting percussionist Ryan Jewell, while Gardner and guest gui- ➔

2019 UPCOMING SHOWS



Presented by cricket wireless

- 3/29 The Selena Experience
- 3/30 The Interrupters w/ Masked Intruder & Ratboy **LOW TICKET WARNING**
- 4/3 Epik High **LOW TICKET WARNING**
- 4/5 Failure & Swervedriver w/ Criminal Hygiene
- 4/6 Eric B & Rakim
- 4/11 We Came As Romans & Crown The Empire w/ Erra
- 4/12 Citizen Cope w/ David Ramirez & MAYEANA
- 4/14 Dungeon Family Tour 2019 feat: Big Boi, Goodie Mob, Organized Noize, KP The Great & More!
- 4/16 Gunna w/ Shy Glizzy & Lil Keed
- 4/18 Dance Gavin Dance **LOW TICKET WARNING** 4/19 Dance Gavin Dance **LOW TICKET WARNING**
- 4/20 SiriusXM Presents: Yacht Rock Review
- 4/26 Rival Sons w/ The Sheepdogs **LOW TICKET WARNING**
- 4/27 Bad Suns w/ Carlie Hanson **LOW TICKET WARNING**
- 4/28 Julia Michaels w/ Josie Dunne **LOW TICKET WARNING**
- 4/29 LEON w/Morgan Saint **LOW TICKET WARNING**
- 5/1 Lovelytheband w/ Flora Cash & Jagwar Twin **LOW TICKET WARNING**
- 5/2 Overkill w/ Death Angel and Act of Defiance

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FIRE-TOOLZ 2PM



DJ CLENT 3PM



NEGATIVE SCANNER

3PM



MUSIC

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tarist Willie Lane swap bright, burning leads that sound like what Jerry Garcia and Bob Weir might've produced had they steered "Dark Star" onto unpatrolled country roads before lighting up their afterburners. Local drummer Charles Rumbach, who has explored similar territory with guitarist Ryley Walker, will join Elkhorn for their Chicago debut. Also on the bill is a very different but similarly mind-altering electric guitar duo, Mark Shippy and Daniel Wyche, who've recorded a pair of cassettes with drummer Ben Billington on which they manipulate feedback to sound like a ray-gun shoot-out. Also performing is saxophonist Molly Jones, who recently moved to Chicago from Detroit. —BILL MEYER

MONDAY15

ELECTRIC WIZARD See *Pick of the Week*, page 30. 8 PM, Riviera Theatre, 4746 N. Racine, \$35. 18+

J FERNANDEZ *Coughy and Izzy True open.* 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle, 1035 N. Western. 21+ FREE

In our new era of mellow Chicago indie rock, when Whitney's gentle "country soul" has earned praise from Elton John and Paul Cherry's incandescent



J Fernandez COURTESY OF FORCEFIELD PR

yacht rock rakes in Spotify streams by the millions, I wonder why the tender tunes of J Fernandez haven't earned him headlining sets in the city's biggest rooms. Fernandez's second album, November's *Occasional Din* (Joyful Noise), is one of 2018's best overlooked releases by any Chicago artist; its charming, airtight songs hark back to 60s vocal pop, and he delivers them with exacting mastery and a loving touch. Fernandez exudes such a pleasant calm that even the postapocalyptic society in the spookily anxious "Volcanic Winter" feels a little less bleak. —LEOR GALIL

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AUG 11



W/ SPECIAL GUEST SUZANNE VEGA

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GOSSIP WOLF

A furry ear to the ground of the local music scene

GOSSIP WOLF GOT hooked on local experimental pop trio **White Ppl** late last year via their debut single, “Iloveybb.” Rapper-producer **Ano Ba** and singers **Elly Tier** and **Cado San** (none of whom is white) transform bits of rap, indie rock, outre dance, folk, and soul into enchanting songs. On Saturday, April 13, White Ppl play the **Whistler’s** monthly **Brasstax** series alongside the DJs who organize it. The free show starts at 10 PM, and the Brasstax crew are accepting donations to raise funds for **Hoist Fest**—a daylong event at Subterranean on Sunday, May 26, where White Ppl will play with Rich Jones, Jordanna, Jovan Landry, and more.

Gossip Wolf has fond memories of bassist **Paul Parts** and drummer **Ross Howard** tearing up house shows with garage rockers Mama. After bandleader Chris DeArcangelis revamped Mama’s lineup in 2016, Parts and Howard teamed up with guitarist **Adam Cohen-Leadholm** (and drummer P.T. Bell, since departed) to form **Bandy**—and their power pop comes loaded with just as many brilliant hooks and just as much fuel for basement pogoing! Last month, Bandy dropped **The Challengers** via Texas label **Under the Counter Tapes**, and when they play **Reed’s Local** on Thursday, April 11, they’ll have copies to sell (along with their 2017 EP, *About*).

Duane Powell is not only a spectacular DJ and stylish dude but also a heck of a soul historian. His **Rear View Mirror Sessions** illuminate the careers of classic singers and maverick producers by pairing a lecture from Powell with a performance by an artist who vibes with his subject. Previous installments of the free series have examined Maurice White of Earth, Wind & Fire and Patti LaBelle; this season kicks off Thursday, April 11, at the **Green Line Performing Arts Center** with a lecture on songwriter **Eugene McDaniels** and a set by **Tiaybe Bledsoe**. Sessions this spring will highlight Curtis Mayfield and Sugar Hill Records cofounder Sylvia Robinson. —**J.R. NELSON AND LEOR GALIL**

Got a tip? Tweet @Gossip.Wolf or e-mail gossipwolf@chicagoreader.com.

CHICAGO SHOWS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT IN THE WEEKS TO COME

ALL AGES FREE



Death © PETER WOLF

NEW

American Music Festival featuring the Waco Brothers, NRBQ, C.J. Chenier, and more 7/3-6, 4:30 PM, FitzGerald’s, Berwyn, on sale Fri 4/12, 11 AM

Basta 12/14, 7 PM, Concord Music Hall, 17+

Bike Cops, Impulsive Hearts, Gal Gun 4/22, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle

Black Caviar 4/20, 10 PM, Electric Hotel

A.A. Bondy 6/22, 9 PM, Sleeping Village

Bone Thugs-n-Harmony 5/3, 6:30 PM, Concord Music Hall, 17+

Bongripper, Like Rats, Aurora L’Orealis 5/11, 8:30 PM, Sleeping Village

Las Cafeteras 11/22, 9 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+

Cake 8/8, 7 PM, Canal Shore Golf Club, Evanston, on sale Fri 4/12, 10 AM

Cinthie, Garrett David, Alejandro 5/9, 10 PM, Spy Bar

Classixx (DJ set) 7/20, 2 PM, Virgin Hotel

Dead Meadow 6/13, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle

Death, Ono, Breathing Light 4/27, 7 PM, Avondale Music Hall

Dijon 6/22, 8 PM, Schubas

Dressy Bessy, Colleen Green, Potty Mouth 6/26, 8 PM, Sleeping Village

88Glam 5/6, 8 PM, Subterranean, 17+

Felice Brothers, Johnathan Rice 5/2, 9 PM, Sleeping Village

Flamingosis 6/15, 2 PM, Virgin Hotel

Fontaines D.C., Pottery 9/15, 8 PM, Lincoln Hall, on sale Fri 4/12, 10 AM, 18+

Foxing, Now Now, Daddy Issues 4/19, 8 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+

Fruit Bats 8/9, 9 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+

Mary Gauthier 6/6, 8 PM, Szold Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music

Glitter Moneyyyy, DXTR Spits, McKinley Dixon, So Pretty 5/4, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle

Guerilla Toss, Blacker Face, Good Willsmith 4/25, 8 PM, Sleeping Village

Mayer Hawthorne (DJ set) 5/11, 2 PM, Virgin Hotel

Hoist Fest with Rich Jones, Brasstax, Jordanna, White Ppl, Defcee, and more 5/26, 4 PM, Subterranean, 17+

Bruce Hornsby & the Noise-makers, Suzanne Vega 8/11, 6:30 PM, Canal Shores Golf Club, Evanston, on sale Fri 4/12, 10 AM

Horse Feathers 5/30, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston

Hudson Taylor 5/25, 8 PM, Beat Kitchen, 18+

Jackopierce 7/12, 8 PM, City Winery, on sale Thu 4/11, noon

Justindemus, Melvin Henry 4/30, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle

Lucy Kaplansky 5/17, 8 PM, Szold Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music

Knife Knights, Lando Chill, Curta 5/3, 9 PM, Sleeping Village

Ben Kweller 7/20, 8:30 PM, SPACE, Evanston, on sale Fri 4/12, 10 AM

Alex Lahey 8/27, 8 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+

Jacob Lee 7/24, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston

Legendary Shack Shakers 7/28, 7 PM, Reggie’s Music Joint

Luluc 6/12, 8 PM, Schubas, 18+

Mandolin Orange, I’m With Her 8/9, 7 PM, Canal Shores Golf Club, Evanston, on sale Fri 4/12, 10 AM

Stephen Marley, Mystic Marley 6/9, 7 PM, Park West, 18+

Jonah Matranga, Nathan Gray 5/19, 6:30 PM, Bottom

Lounge

Jackie Mendoza 7/15, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle

Monatik 11/23, 7 PM, Concord Music Hall, 17+

Ohmme, Bunny, Cold Beaches 4/27, 8 PM, Sleeping Village

Okkervil River, Lip Talk 7/12, 10 PM, Maurer Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music

J.S. Ondara 10/24, 7:30 PM, Lincoln Hall

Ozomatli 6/28, 9 PM, Schubas

Sam Prekop, Aki Tsuyuko, Douglas McCombs 6/8, 8:30 PM, Constellation, 18+

Louie Prima Jr. & the Witnesses 7/26, 8 PM, City Winery, on sale Thu 4/11, noon

Quantic (DJ set) 8/17, 2 PM, Virgin Hotel

Joshua Radin & the Weepies 10/24, 7:30 PM, Thalia Hall, on sale Fri 4/12, 10 AM, 17+

Red Wanting Blue 7/31, 8 PM, City Winery, on sale Thu 4/11, noon

Reverend Peyton’s Big Damn Band 7/25, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston

Ruidofest with Los Tigres del Norte, Hombres G, Enanitos Verdes, and more 6/21-23, 1 PM, Union Park

Saymyname, Porn and Chicken, Osevera 4/26, 10 PM, Sound-Bar

Shura 10/16, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle, on sale Fri 4/12, 10 AM

Sonreal 6/22, 8 PM, Lincoln Hall

Spanish Love Songs, Drew Thomson Foundation, Turnspit 5/19, 6 PM, Cobra Lounge

Spring Awakening Music Festival with Zedd, Destructo, and more 6/7-9, 1 PM, Poplar Creek Music Theater, Hoffman Estates, 18+

Chase Spruill 4/21, 8:30 PM, Constellation, violin; playing works by Michael Nyman, 18+

Angie Stone 7/5, 7 and 10 PM, City Winery, on sale Thu 4/11,

noon

Television 5/10, 7 and 10 PM, Maurer Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music, on sale Fri 4/12, 8 AM

Thank You Scientist, Kindo, In the Presence of Wolves 4/24, 8 PM, Sleeping Village

Tinariwen 10/1, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+

Touche Amore, P.O.S., True Love 6/20, 8 PM, Bottom Lounge, 17+

True Widow, Telekinetic Yeti, Rezn 4/20, 8:30 PM, Sleeping Village

Jeff Tweedy, Ohmme 8/10, 7 PM, Canal Shores Golf Club, Evanston, on sale Fri 4/12, 10 AM

Twrp, Protomen 7/12, 8 PM, Lincoln Hall

Unspooling, Matt Ulery Sextet 4/18, 8:30 PM, Constellation, 18+

Will Varley, Adam Lee, Ross W. Berman IV 6/20, 6 PM, Cobra Lounge

Wand, Dreamdecay, Wet Piss 6/23, 8 PM, Sleeping Village

Faye Webster 6/19, 8 PM, Schubas, on sale Thu 4/11, 9 AM, 18+

Worriers, Awakebutstillinbed, Pity Party 5/24, 7 PM, Cobra Lounge, 17+

Xavier Wulf, Beau Young Prince, Marty Grimes, Reco-Havoc 5/29, 7:30 PM, Bottom Lounge

Xuitcasecity 6/15, 8:30 PM, Chop Shop, 18+

Nilüfer Yanya, Pixx 7/31, 8 PM, Sleeping Village

UPDATED

Family of the Year, Hollis Brown 5/4, 8 PM, Bottom Lounge, canceled, refunds available at point of purchase, 17+

Joanna Newsom 10/7-10, 9 PM, Thalia Hall, 10/7-10/9 sold out; 10/10 added and on sale Fri 4/12, 10 AM, 17+

UPCOMING

Cisco Adler 4/30, 7 PM, Schubas

Adventure Club, Riot Ten, Tynan, Inzo 5/3, 9 PM, Aragon Ballroom, 18+

Allah-Lahs, Tim Hill 8/16, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle

Herb Alpert & Lani Hall 5/4-5, 8 PM, City Winery

Avantasia 5/21, 8 PM, Patio Theater

Bear’s Den 5/27, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+

Beast Coast, Joey Bada\$, Flatbush Zombies 8/14, 7 PM, Huntington Bank Pavilion

Bilmuri, No Dice 4/25, 7 PM, Bottom Lounge

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Andrew Bird, Madison Cunningham 7/16, 7:30 PM, Chicago Theatre

Elvin Bishop’s Big Fun Trio 5/30, 8 PM, City Winery

Andy Black 5/7, 6:30 PM, Metro

Black Coffee 5/11, 9 PM, Concord Music Hall, 18+

Carbon Leaf 4/19, 8 PM, City Winery

Jawbox 7/27-28, 7:30 PM, Metro, 7/27 sold out

L7, Le Butcherettes 5/21, 7:30 PM, Metro, 18+

Lucette, Long Lost 6/20, 9 PM, Schubas, 18+

Maypole Folk Festival featuring Sam Amidon, the Western Elstons, and more 4/27, 2 PM, Empty Bottle

MC Lars, MC Frontalot 5/3, 6 PM, Cobra Lounge

Mini Mansions 6/7, 9 PM, Empty Bottle

Missio 4/20, 8 PM, Metro, 18+

Mystery Skulls, Phangs, Snowblind 7/23, 6:30 PM, Subterranean

Ayla Nereo 4/25, 7 PM, Schubas

New Found Glory, Real Friends 6/23, 6 PM, Concord Music Hall, 17+

Johnny Orlando, Hayden Summerall 4/29, 7:30 PM, Park West

Pink Avalanche, Anatomy of Habit, Djuna 4/18, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle

Sego, Nectar 5/18, 10 PM, Schubas, 18+

Shed, Aurora Halal, Ariel Zetina 5/3, 10 PM, Smart Bar

Slushii 5/18, 9 PM, Aragon Ballroom, 18+

Smallpools 5/29, 7:30 PM, Park West

Soledad 5/22, 8 PM, Maurer Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music

Tommi Zender 6/2, 7 PM, SPACE, Evanston

Tunic 4/21, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle

Turnover, Turnstile 5/2, 6 PM, Concord Music Hall

Xiu Xiu 5/17, 9 PM, Empty Bottle

Yheti, Nastynasty, Eazybaked 5/3, 10 PM, Bottom Lounge, 17+

Ted Yoder 5/21, 7:30 PM, SPACE, Evanston

Yungblud 7/13, 8:30 PM, Lincoln Hall

Zveri 5/31, 7 PM, Concord Music Hall, 17+

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Advice on how to make your fantasies feel real (without catfishing anyone)

Q: I'm a heteroflexible married cis woman in my 40s. I'm also a POS cheater and a catfish. I really fucked up. One year ago, I met an older man in an online fetish forum. He sent me an unsolicited PM, and we have talked for hours every day since then. My husband, whom I've been married to for more than 20 years, does not know that I am having an emotional affair. I have no intention of telling my husband what I've done. I have been honest with my online boyfriend about everything except my name, my age, and the fact that I have a husband. (I know those are all really big things to lie about.) My boyfriend lied to me early on about his name, age, and relationship status, but came clean out of guilt. So I had the opportunity to say that

I lied too, but I didn't take it. I know what I'm doing is wrong. My husband would be very hurt if he knew. And my boyfriend, who wants to make a life together, would be very hurt as well. I'm in love with both men, but I'm not leaving my husband. I know the only right thing to do is break things off with my boyfriend. I've tried multiple times: I've told him that he is better off without me, that I'm a bad person, and that he shouldn't trust me. Each time, he convinces me to stay. We have not been physical. We have never even been in the same room, much to his dismay. I have thought about telling him the truth, but I am worried about my safety, and I do not want to hurt him any worse than I already have. Plus, I'm a fucking coward. I am in treatment for PTSD.

My therapist believes that my actions are a coping mechanism, i.e., it is easier to pretend to be someone else than it is to be me. I don't think she's wrong, but I also don't think it excuses what I've done. How do I end this relationship without doing any more damage to my two partners? —**CONNING AND TRICKING FOR INTENSELY SELFISH HAVEN**

A: Far be it from me to question your therapist's assessment—she's spoken with you on multiple occasions, and her insights are doubtless more informed—but I think her framing falls short.

She describes your actions as a coping mechanism: You told a stranger lies and abused your husband's trust to escape your miserable life. If you weren't so fucking miserable—if other people and/or circumstances hadn't conspired to make you so fucking miserable—you wouldn't have done this. But despite your therapist's efforts to help you down off that hook, CATFISH, you seem determined to hang there. She's offering you absolution while you stand around flagellating yourself.

Personally, I think you're entitled to your feelings. Go ahead and feel terrible. You did a bad thing. It's not the worst thing someone's ever done online, and most people know not to take what a stranger tells them on the internet at face value. But if feeling terrible doesn't motivate you to make changes . . . well, it's not for me to

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By Dan Savage

question your sincerity. But some people think it's okay to do terrible things so long as they have the decency to feel terrible about having done them. If you're not one of those people, doing something about it and learning something from it will alleviate your misery.

Here's what you need to do: End things with your boyfriend. Write him an e-mail, tell him the truth about your age, marital status, and unavailability. Don't share your real name with him; you're under no obligation to do so, and if he turns out to be the vindictive type, CATFISH, you don't want him to have your real identity. Apologize for not coming clean when he did—he lied to you too at the start—and thank him for the pleasure of his virtual company and the joy he brought to your life. Then block him.

Here's what you need to learn: You didn't do this just because you're miserable. You did this because it was fun. We call it "play" when children pretend to be someone or something they're not. Vulnerable children pretend to be big and powerful superheroes and/or monsters to cope with and momentarily escape their relative powerlessness. And nothing makes a child's playful fantasy feel more real than a good friend who plays along.

Most adults don't make time for play—most of us aren't LARPerS or kinksters—but even adults need play. You found a space where you could play and you found a playmate who helped make your fantasies feel real. It got out of hand when arousal, orgasms, oxytocin, and promises you couldn't keep got stirred into the mix.

You need to find a way to build some play into your life, sexual and/or nonsexual, that doesn't require you to lie or hide. It would be great if you could do that with your husband, CATFISH, but if he's not willing or able to play with you, get his okay to play on your own. 

Send letters to mail@savagelove.net.

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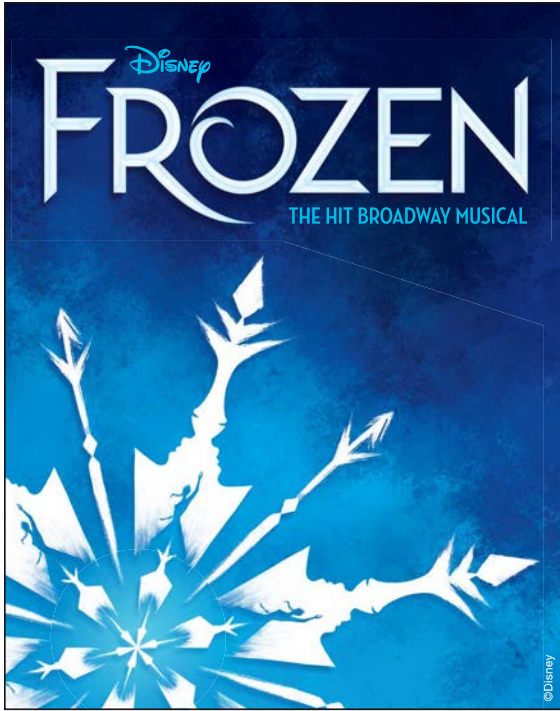
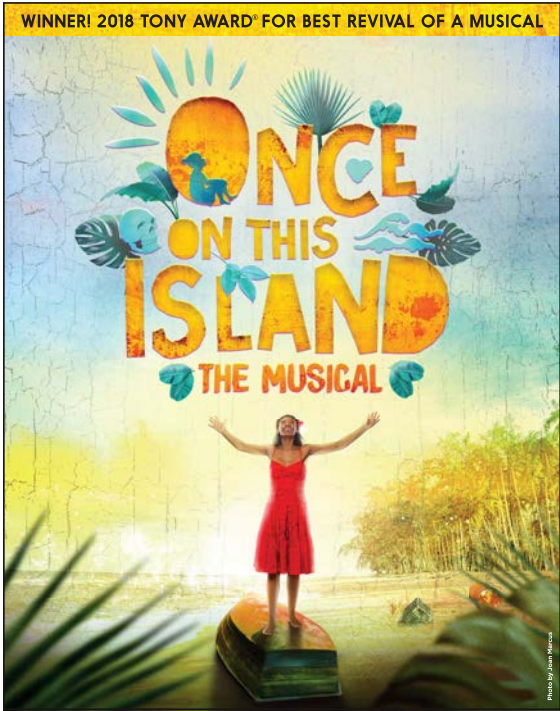
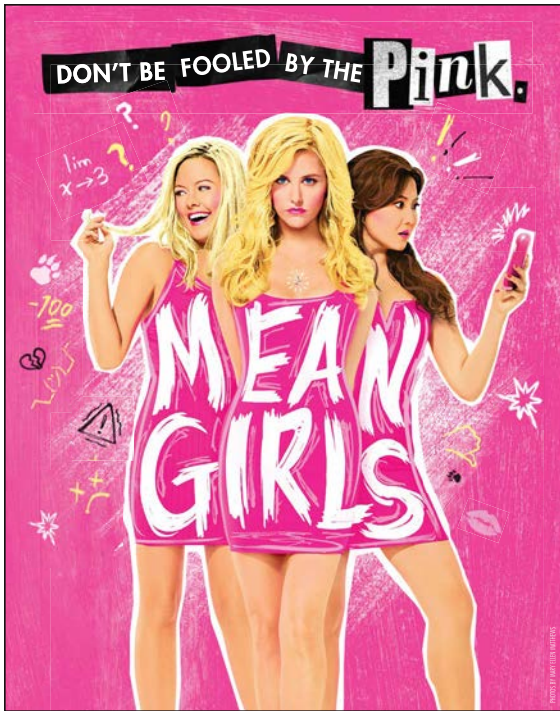
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